ARETHA FRANKLIN | SIMON & GARFUNKEL | THE WHO | THE ROLLING STONES

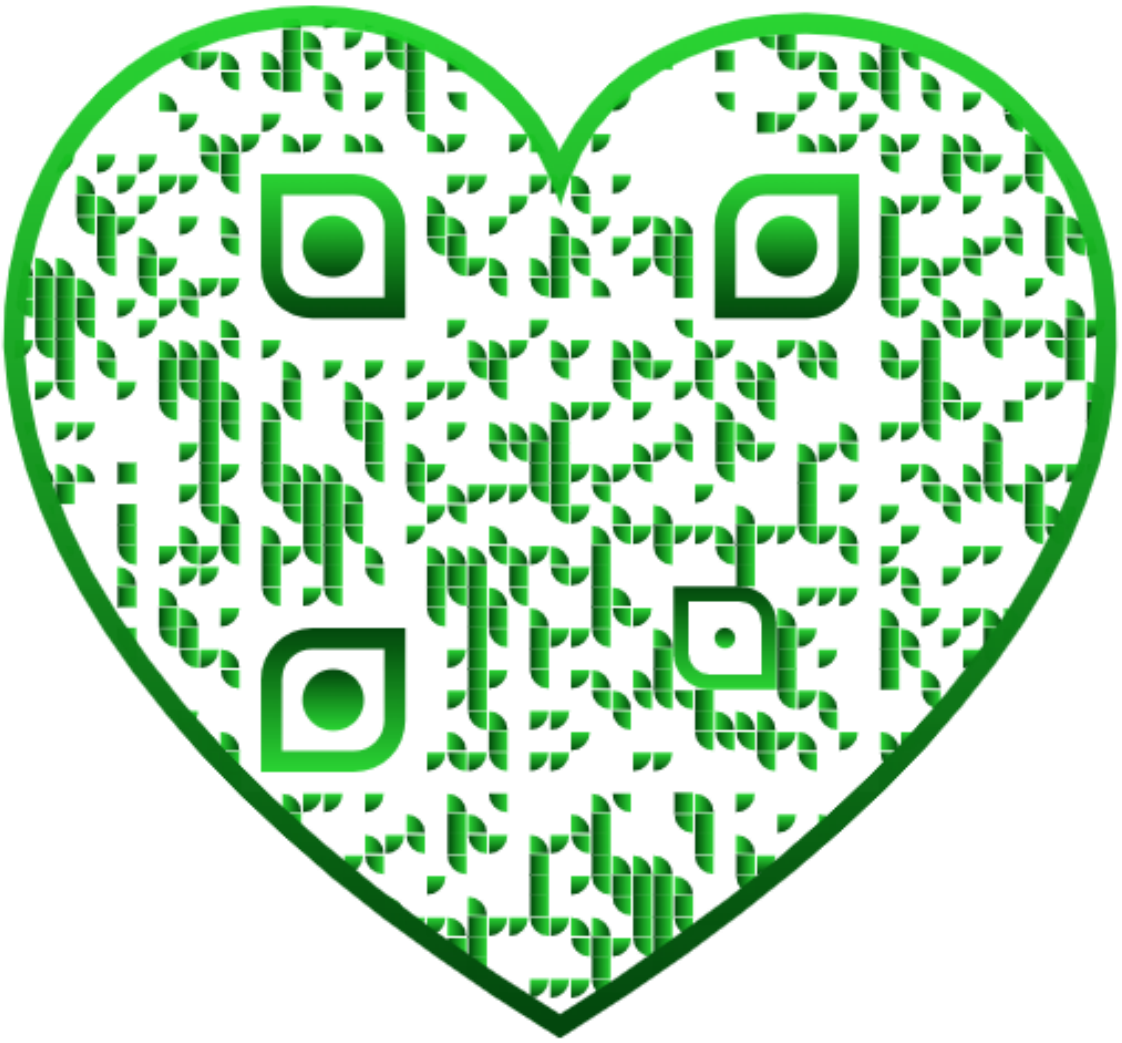
LIFE EXPLORES

MUSIC OF 1968

ROCK AND ROLL'S GREATEST YEAR

PLUS:
THE BEATLES AT THEIR PEAK

A REISSUE OF A SPECIAL EDITION



CV2 MUSIC OF 1968

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ROCK AND ROLL'S GREATEST YEAR

SMOKE AND FIRE
Guitarist Jimi Hendrix, from a photo shoot for his 1968 album *Electric Ladyland*.

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PUT UP YOUR DUKES
Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr at the Old Street Underground station, the fifth location of their July 1968 "Mad Day Out" photo session.

1968

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Mick Jagger summed it up best: "What can a poor boy do, except to sing for a rock and roll band?"

For rock and roll lovers, 1968 hit the mother lode. Psychedelia ruled, and so did protest, Motown, and Johnny Cash's twang. The Rolling Stones blasted back onto the airwaves with *Beggars Banquet*. Heavy metal was ascendant. The Beatles, in spite of personal resentments and professional differences, followed *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* with an LP that since has been embraced as even more iconic: *The Beatles*, a.k.a. the White Album. While Jimi Hendrix was torching guitars and putting the polishing touches on *Electric Ladyland*, Janis Joplin was shedding Big Brother and the Holding Company and starting a band of her own. Out in Los Angeles's Laurel Canyon, Joni Mitchell's boyfriend, Graham Nash, casually walked into a jam session. There he found two other like-minded musicians—an encounter that led to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, probably the most famous supergroup ever.

The lyrics these bands and solo artists produced were much more than an echo of the nightly news. They comprised a story unto itself. Rock groups captured the feelings and thoughts of young and old around the globe. The songs were defiant; they were joyous. They were earsplitting and tenderly sweet. Some vented against Vietnam and injustice, but others rued love gone wrong and hoped for a better tomorrow. When Sly Stone appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, he opened by telling the audience, "Don't hate the Black, don't hate the white. If you get bitten, simply hate the bite," and concluded with a simple "Thank you for letting us be ourselves."

Rock and roll helped change the conversation in 1968. It also changed the world. ■

CAPACITY CROWD
In March 1968, the Grateful Dead played a free show on the back of a flatbed truck for thousands of fans who flocked to San Francisco's Haight Street.

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

Rock exploded in 1968, with the Rolling Stones, the Band, and Sly Stone all heading in different directions.

HOMAGE TO BOSCH

To promote *Beggars Banquet*, the Rolling Stones staged an elaborate medieval banquet in the ruins of an English estate. In its review of the album, *Time* magazine described the band as "England's most subversive roisterers since Fagin's gang in *Oliver Twist*."

JIMI HENDRIX

UNBOUND BY RULES

The left-handed guitarist, who played a right-handed instrument upside down, defied musical gravity in 1968 with *Electric Ladyland*. But it was also the year Hendrix began to spin out of control.

Go figure. Jimi Hendrix didn't like the Army.

It was May 1962, and the future guitar-playing voodoo child, assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, was "unable to conform to military rules and regulations," in the words of an official report. The 18-year-old missed bed check, slept when he was supposed to be working, and was unintelligible in conversation. One superior wanted him discharged. Another narrowed Hendrix's problem to this: "His mind apparently can not function while performing duties and thinking about his guitar."

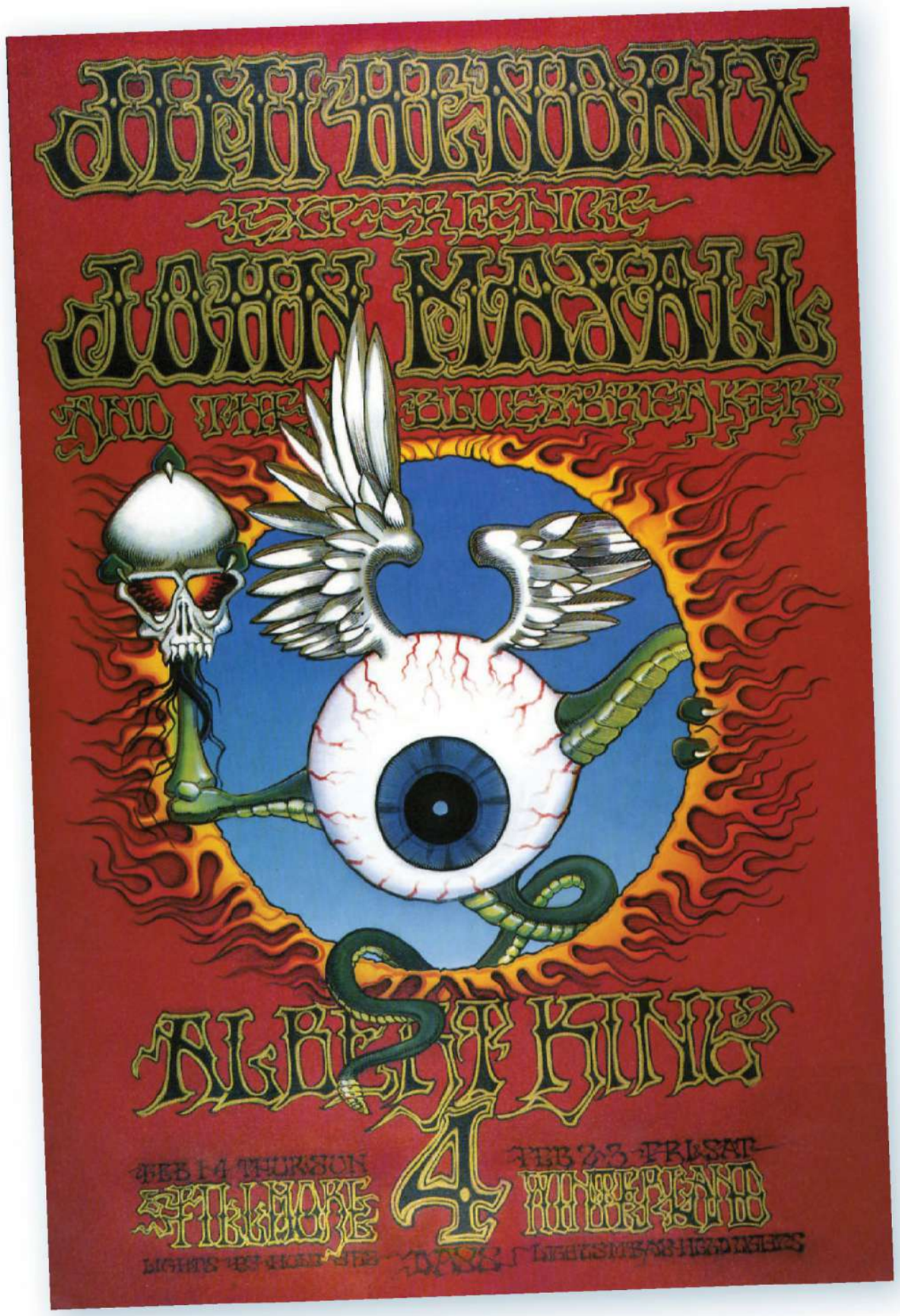
Amen to that. Had it been otherwise, the world might never have met James Marshall Hendrix, the Stratocaster-burning, blues-bending left-hander who played a right-handed guitar upside down. Hendrix came seemingly from out of nowhere, was discovered in New York, hustled off to London, where he became a star, and then returned to the U.S., where he introduced himself to Americans at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival. There, he blew past the Who's Pete Townshend by torching his guitar and tossing the remains into the audience. For Hendrix, 1968 was the tipping point. He no longer had to worry about money. He was deep into recording his masterpiece, *Electric Ladyland*, and was an international star.

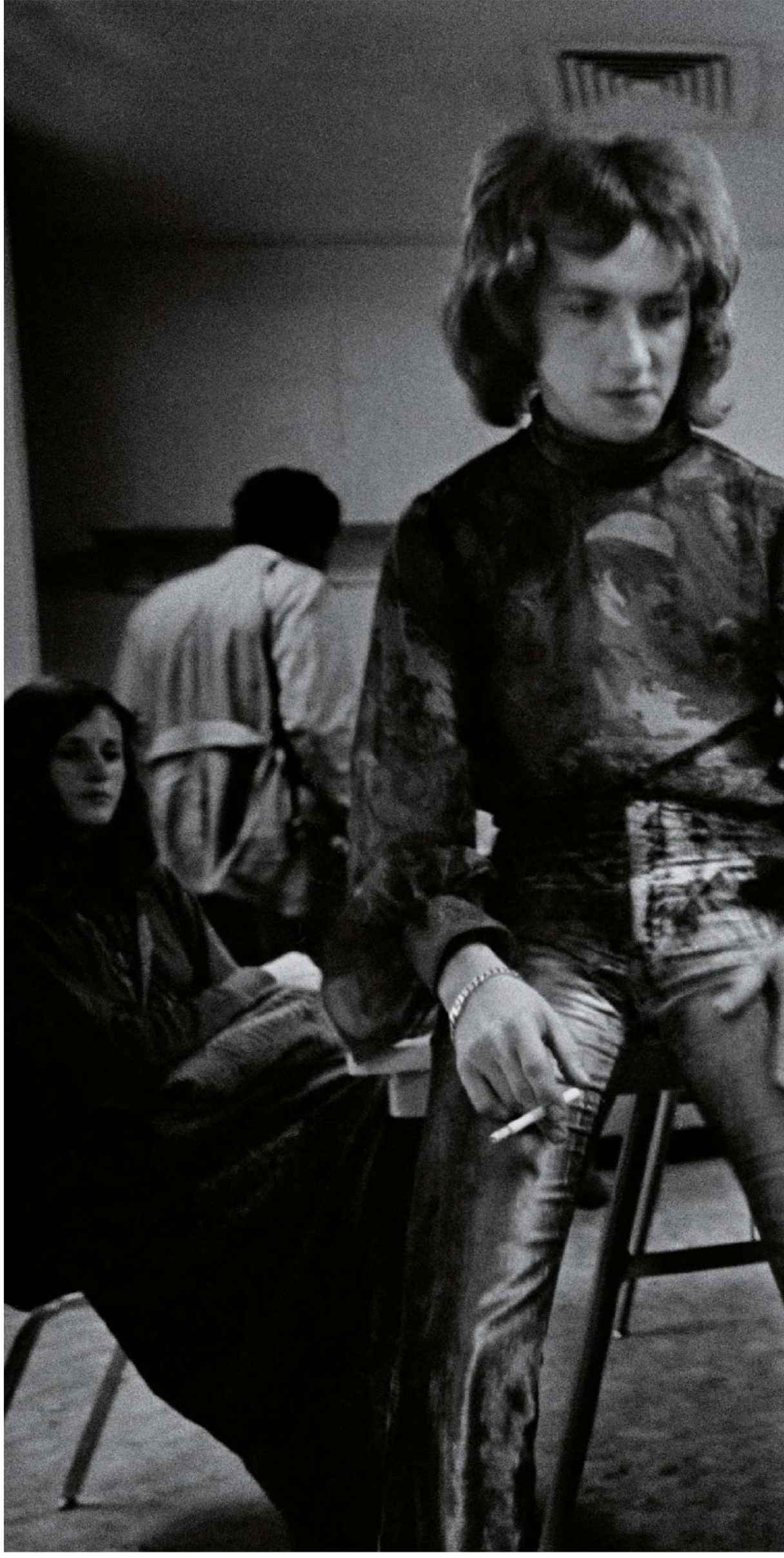
But 1968 was also the beginning of the end for his band, the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Although *Electric Ladyland* is celebrated for its innovative techniques and its heavy-hitter cameos (Traffic's Steve Winwood and Jack Casady of Jefferson Airplane), Hendrix's perfectionism and the druggie chaos at the studio drove manager Chas Chandler to quit. Construction costs spiraled at the studio Hendrix was building, and to pay the bills he was forced out on the road. Relations between Hendrix and his bass player were so strained on tour that after a fight one night in Gothenburg, Sweden, Hendrix tore up his hotel room in a drug-and-alcohol-fueled rampage. He was found in a pool of his own blood, was taken to the hospital, and, after being charged with criminal damage, was placed under a travel ban by local authorities. Soon the Experience would announce it was dissolving.

"From mid-'68 onward, things within his organization began to slowly spin out of control," writes John Perry in *Jimi Hendrix's Electric Ladyland*. "The operation . . . looked to outsiders like a mess of conflicting greed and connivance, a set-up that may arguably have hastened [Hendrix's] early death."

Hendrix was first drawn to R&B while growing up in Seattle, and he immersed himself in the music. His first

JIMI SINGS THE BLUES
In October 1968, Hendrix and his band played six shows over three days at San Francisco's historic Winterland Ballroom.





"guitar" was a broom. "Pa would come home and see the straw and sh-- from the broom on the floor, because Jimi'd been doing acrobatics with his broom-guitar, and Jimi'd get a whuppin'," Hendrix's younger brother, Leon, later told the *Guardian*'s Ed Vulliamy. After being arrested for riding in a stolen car in 1961, Hendrix agreed to enlist in the Army to avoid jail time, and his early discharge a year later freed him to pursue music full-time. Hendrix landed gigs playing for Little Richard, Curtis Knight, and the Isley Brothers, but he struggled on his own in New York. As it happened, Chas Chandler, the bass player for the Animals, who wanted to get into management, caught a set Hendrix played at Café Wha? early in 1966 and signed him. By September, Hendrix was in London with a recording contract and was subletting an apartment from Ringo Starr.

The 23-year-old flowered. The blues were more popular in the British capital than in the U.S., and rock music was exploding with musicians—the Who, the Stones—inspired by its sounds. Hendrix fit right in. "White America was listening to Doris Day; black American music got nowhere near white AM radio," Tony Garland, who was part of Hendrix's management team, told Vulliamy. "Jimi was too white for black radio. Here, there were a lot of white guys listening to blues from America and wanting to sound like their heroes."

The expat quickly formed a band, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and when the trio wasn't touring, it was in the studio recording. Soon they were cranking out hits like "Hey Joe," which reached No. 6 on the U.K. chart in early 1967. With the release of *Are You Experienced?*, their double-platinum debut album, the Experience was all the rage in London. After Hendrix's performance at Monterey, his career went international.

Electric Ladyland, assembled between July 1967 and August 1968 mostly at New York's Record Plant, is often hailed as the Jimi Hendrix Experience's masterpiece, a moody soundscape of jazz, rock, soul, and blues. Hendrix produced and directed every aspect of the album, from first demos to final mixes. He stacked voices and mixed notes in ways that defied music theory. With a wah-wah pedal and bent notes, he transformed Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" into one of the best covers ever recorded. Hendrix was typically shy about his singing voice, but he was so pleased with the playback for the cut "Have You Ever Been (to Electric Ladyland)," he pranced about, shouting, "I can sing! I can sing!" The album, released in October, quickly went to No. 1 and became an instant classic.

EYES ON YOU
Top left, the poster for Hendrix's 1968 concert at the Fillmore East, designed by Rick Griffin. Above, Hendrix backstage at the Winterland.

But by that time, Hendrix was often operating in a chemical haze. With financial pressures and personality differences heating up, bassist Noel Redding left in early 1969 for a different band. Hendrix considered reforming the Experience, but it wasn't to be. On September 18, 1970, he died in a London hotel room of an overdose. ■

THE ROLLING STONES

GRITTY, RAW, AND LOUD

With *Beggars Banquet*, the Stones abandoned psychedelia and returned to their bluesy roots. The results wowed their critics and pointed rock and roll in a new direction.

One morning in early June 1968, Mick Jagger was in a Los Angeles recording studio laying down vocals for "Sympathy for the Devil," the opening track on the Rolling Stones' album in progress, *Beggars Banquet*. On hand were film director Jean-Luc Godard, who was making a documentary about the band; Jagger's girlfriend Marianne Faithfull; and the Stones' recording engineer, producer, and other studio crew. As Jagger dug into the lyrics, Faithfull scrawled her approval with lipstick, in reverse letters, on the glass pane of the recording booth: "Burn Baby Burn."

Then the booth did just that, spontaneously bursting into flames, perhaps because of tissue paper that had been taped to the overhead lights. Before firefighters could extinguish the blaze, a hole had been burned in the ceiling. The Stones continued recording beneath the open sky, stopping only "whenever a plane flew over," audio engineer Phill Brown later told Rich Cohen, the author of *The Sun & the Moon & the Rolling Stones*, a history of the band.

It was an apt metaphor for the debut of *Beggars Banquet*, because with its release on December 6, 1968, the Rolling Stones were on fire. Critics and fans who had skewered the band's previous album, 1967's psychedelic *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, forgave them everything. In his review, a 22-year-old Jann Wenner compared the two records, referring to *Satanic Majesties* as "the prototype of junk masquerading as meaningful" and raving that with *Beggars Banquet*, "the Rolling Stones have returned, and they are bringing back rock and roll with them." The band was entering its most creative period. It was the Stones' first foray with 26-year-old American producer Jimmy Miller, who would help shape LPs *Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers*, *Exile on Main St.*, and *Goats Head Soup*. It was also the last time they would record a full album with guitarist Brian Jones, who was so strung out on weed, quaaludes, acid, and booze that he would soon be forced out of the band.

At a moment when many musicians were paddling as fast as they could to catch up to the technological pyrotechnics of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Beggars Banquet*—the name came from Christopher Gibbs, who was decorating Jagger's Chelsea flat—went in the opposite direction. It was

EVERYBODY'S HERE

The two-day promotional shoot for *Beggars Banquet*, staged by an advertising photographer, featured cattle, a cat, three dogs, a sheep, a goat, and the five band members.

After 1967, the Rolling Stones' annus horribilis, the band needed a hit. It was called *Beggars Banquet*.

gritty, raw, and loud, defying both the political and music establishments and pointing rock in a new direction. The album is "bluesy without necessarily being the blues, lascivious, libidinous, and always about an arm's length from both the advancements and the trappings of the '60s," says music reviewer Eric Klinger on Popmatters.com, which covers popular culture. "*Beggars Banquet* marks a decided shift in rock culture."

AFTER 1967, THE STONES' ANNUS HORRIBILIS, THE band needed a hit. The year had begun with Jagger and lead guitarist Keith Richards being busted for drug possession and fighting prison terms for months on end. Jones, too, had a run-in with the law, over marijuana, and escaped jail only because of testimony from his psychiatrist. On the personnel and personal fronts, there were tensions as well. Jagger and Richards increasingly were fed up with Andrew Loog Oldham, the band's manager and producer, and hoped to cut ties with him. Then Richards stole Jones's girlfriend, the actress and model Anita Pallenberg. *Satanic Majesties*, recorded during the mayhem, mystified critics, who weren't sure if it was a spoof of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* or if the Stones were trying to squeeze traction out of psychedelia.

The Stones began working on *Beggars Banquet* at Olympic Studios in London in February 1968 and finished in June. It was the fastest album they had recorded to date and, unlike earlier efforts, was broadly aware of the world. "Street Fighting Man" acknowledged the protest movement and famously shrugged: "What can a poor boy do, except to sing for a rock and roll band?" "Salt of the Earth" was a tribute to the working class. In rerecording "Sympathy for the Devil" just after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, Jagger changed the lyric from "I shouted out, 'Who killed Kennedy? After all it was you and me' " to "I shouted out, 'Who killed the Kennedys? When after all it was you and me.' " Jones usually was too wasted to contribute, but when he played, he played beautifully.

Once the album was done, its release was delayed by six months, until December, as the Stones and their labels, Decca Records in England and London Records in the U.S., faced off over the cover art. Jagger and Richards wanted to use a photo of a public toilet with graffiti on the walls that had been shot in the bathroom of a Porsche dealership in L.A. For the back cover, the two had used crayons and markers to scrawl in the album credits and one-liners such as "Wot No Paper!" They argued that the pictures were "within the bounds of good taste," as Jagger put it. Still, both labels rejected the image, and in the end the band agreed to go instead with a plain white cover that looked like an invitation card, complete with an RSVP.

In the meantime, controversy around the album mounted. When the lead single, "Street Fighting Man,"

ABOUT-FACE
Brian Jones, Charlie Watts, Mick Jagger, Bill Wyman, and Keith Richards during the filming of a video for the Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash," released as a single in '68. At right: The band lost a fight to use the shot of a Porsche dealership's bathroom as the cover art for *Beggars Banquet*.

debuted in the U.S. in August 1968, many radio stations refused to play it, on the grounds that its lyrics were subversive. "Sympathy" provoked rumors that band members were devil worshippers. For the release party a few months later at the historic Gore Hotel in London, the Stones dressed as elegant beggars, and their VIP guests were served a seven-course candlelit dinner by waitresses dressed in corsets.

The party erupted into a free-for-all food fight, with custard pies flying, often in the direction of the record-label executives who had vetoed the toilet cover art. The Rolling Stones, indeed, were back. ■

THE WHO

NEW VISION

Pete Townshend began working on a concept album about a "deaf, dumb, and blind kid" named Tommy.

To his followers in the mid-20th century, Indian spiritual master Meher Baba was "Compassionate Father." He preached peace, claimed to be the human incarnation of God, and for 44 years, from 1925 until his death in 1969, never spoke a word. He also was the inspiration for the deaf, mute, and blind hero of *Tommy*, the Who's groundbreaking rock opera.

Guitarist Pete Townshend, the creative force behind *Tommy*, was introduced to Baba's teachings in the fall of 1967 and quickly fell under the guru's influence. At the time, Townshend had been thinking about a project built around long-playing albums, which were on the verge of outselling singles. Baba's silence and mysticism helped give birth to *Tommy*, which followed the life of a young boy who lost his ability to speak, see, and hear after witnessing his father kill his mother's lover.

Throughout 1968, Townshend shaped *Tommy* by tapping his own psyche. In "Cousin Kevin" and "Fiddle About," he tackled the sexual abuse he had suffered as a child. The track "Sensation" was about Townshend's attraction to a fellow Baba follower, and "Sally Simpson" was inspired by an incident he witnessed at a Doors concert. The idea for "Pinball Wizard," one of *Tommy*'s most iconic songs, came from music journalist Nik Cohn, who suggested adding a more upbeat track after hearing an early version of the LP. Since Cohn was a pinball fan, Townshend made Tommy into a mystical master of pinball.

The initial reaction to the album was mixed, and the BBC and a number of U.S. radio stations banned it as offensive. But as the Who began to perform *Tommy* at their live concerts, it won over audiences. More than 50 years later, the LP has sold 20 million-plus copies and inspired the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* and the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. ■

TRACK STARS
The Who circa 1968: from left, Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend, John Entwistle, and Keith Moon.

CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

A SUPERGROUP IS BORN

An impromptu jam session between David Crosby, Stephen Stills, and Graham Nash led to a five-song demo. Then came one of the most famous bands ever.

Graham Nash, David Crosby, and Stephen Stills have been arguing for decades about the first time they played together. Nash and Crosby maintain it was in Joni Mitchell's Laurel Canyon living room, in Los Angeles's Hollywood Hills. Stills remembers the jam session taking place at Mama Cass Elliot's Laurel Canyon dining-room table, in the corner of a stucco room near the kitchen and the pool. Yet another version has the trio playing in the living room of Lovin' Spoonful founder John Sebastian.

No matter which recollection is correct, all three musicians agree that it was in June 1968 and that the song that brought them together was Stills's beautiful ode "You Don't Have to Cry." The singer-songwriter was 23 and still with Buffalo Springfield. But the band was in the process of breaking up, and Stills had started collaborating with Crosby, 26, who recently had split from the Byrds.

The friends were riffing on "You Don't Have to Cry" in an impromptu jam session when Mitchell's boyfriend, Nash, wandered into the room. A guitarist with the British group the Hollies, Nash was in town to see Mitchell, and he asked Stills and Crosby to play the song again. On the third go-around, he joined in, adding a top harmony line that Crosby later characterized as "amazing."

By August, Crosby, Stills & Nash had gone to New York and recorded a five-song demo in a single session. On it were a number of tracks that would become huge hits—among them, "Guinnevere," "You Don't Have to Cry," and "Helplessly Hoping." Like the Band's *Music from Big Pink*, it would help shift the rock ethos from loud guitars and psychedelia to folksier, more harmony-oriented compositions. Within six months, Nash had left the Hollies and Crosby, Stills & Nash had a recording contract.

Just after the trio's eponymously named first album hit stores in May 1969, they asked Stills's former Buffalo Springfield bandmate, guitarist Neil Young, to join them on tour. At that point, they became Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young (CSNY), and they booked their first gig at the Chicago Auditorium on August 16, 1969, with Joni Mitchell as the opening act.

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's second public performance was the following day—in front of half a million hippies in muddy upstate New York, at a music festival called Woodstock. ■

ORDERLY AUDIENCE
Stephen Stills (foreground), Graham Nash, and David Crosby played at the Big Sur Folk Festival, where fans who didn't have the entrance fee lined up quietly on a hill to listen to the music.

SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE

LEADING THE WAY

At a time when Blacks and whites and men and women seemed to exist in separate orbits, along came an interracial funk band with a woman on trumpet and a message of peace.

Sly Stone, the band's founder, was Black, wore an Afro with a life of its own, and favored a bare-chest-and-vest look. Rose Stone, his sister, was the one in a platinum blond wig. Their brother Freddie preferred satin shirts. Cynthia Robinson, on trumpet, had a 'fro to rival Sly's, and bass player Larry Graham liked fedoras. Redheaded sax player Jerry Martini and drummer Greg Errico were white.

It was 1968, and the U.S. had never seen anything like the psychedelic funk group Sly and the Family Stone. At a time when Blacks and whites existed in separate orbits, the Family was interracial. With women marching for equality, the Family's female members weren't eye candy; they played instruments and sang shoulder to shoulder with the men. With the country reeling from unrest over Vietnam and the murders of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the Family preached peace and togetherness.

And 1968 was their breakout year. Bookended by two huge hits, "Dance to the Music" and "Everyday People," 1968 took Sly and the Family Stone to the Fillmore East for four wild shows—including a stoned, seven-minute jam on "St. James Infirmary"—and on their first overseas tour. Along with James Brown, they would introduce funk to a mainstream audience and influence the Temptations and the Isley Brothers. In an iconic appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in December, the Family sang a medley of their hits and finished the set with Sly speaking directly to the audience: "Thank you for letting us be ourselves."

"When Sly was on, there was no touching him," Martini told *Rolling Stone*. "He had that charisma and power where he could stop or start a riot."

In 1943, the year Sly Stone (born Sylvester Stewart) came into the world in Denton, Texas, Jim Crow was still the law of the land and *Brown v. Board of Education* was more than a decade away. The Stewarts, deeply religious, encouraged Sly to worship in song, and when the family moved to the San Francisco area in the 1950s he began to see music as a way to contribute to the civil rights movement. As a deejay at local R&B radio stations, Sly slipped Beatles and Rolling Stones songs in between soul singles. When he formed a band in 1966, the Stoners, it included Robinson, the female trumpeter.

The Stoners became Sly and the Family Stone, and the band started its ascent, as musical acts often did at the time, with

BEDAZZLED
Sly Stone appeared at the Northern California Folk-Rock Festival in San Jose in 1968, along with the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, and the Grateful Dead.

Clive Davis. The CBS producer liked the Family's blend of funk and soul, but after their debut album flopped, he pushed Sly for a crossover pop song. The musician developed a winning formula: He gave each singer in the group a big moment and mixed the vocals with flashy solo instrumentals. In their first outing, it worked: "Dance to the Music," which starts with Robinson yelling at the audience to "get up and dance" and for "all the squares" to go home, made the Top 10 on *Billboard*'s Hot 100 singles chart.

Coupling that smash with a second hit, "Everyday People," in November, the group triggered a chain reaction in the music business. The Temptations released a "Dance to the Music" sound-alike, "Cloud Nine," which won them a Grammy in 1969; the same month, Diana Ross and the Supremes produced "Love Child," an electric warning against premarital sex. The Family's catchy pop/soul/rock songs would influence the music of the multiethnic Eric Burdon and War and dozens more in the future, including Rick James, Prince, and Beck.

With success came the familiar tangle of substance abuse and band politics. By the end of 1969, Sly had moved to Los Angeles and was increasingly disillusioned with the lack of progress on civil rights. The band arrived late for concert dates; Sly often left the stage early and sometimes didn't show up at all. Their music turned dark and pessimistic. Sly and Errico had a falling-out that prompted Errico to leave the group. After a 1975 concert at Radio City Music Hall where less than a quarter of the seats sold, Sly and the Family Stone disbanded.

"Dance to the Music" starts with Robinson yelling at the audience to "get up and dance" and for "all the squares" to go home.

In 2006, the Grammy Awards honored the group with a medley of the Family's best-known songs, sung by Adam Levine and other stars. Halfway through "I Want to Take You Higher," Steven Tyler of Aerosmith surprised the audience by ushering Sly onto the stage. His Afro had been shorn into a blond Mohawk, he wore sunglasses and a silver lamé suit, and he jumped right in singing. But after three minutes, Sly inexplicably walked off the stage, leaving the performers and viewers slack-jawed and scratching their heads. ■

LET'S DANCE
At left, Sly and Rose Stone rehearsed for the TV show *Kraft Music Hall*. Above, from left: Rose, Larry Graham, Sly, Freddie Stone, Greg Errico, Jerry Martini, and Cynthia Robinson.

THE BAND

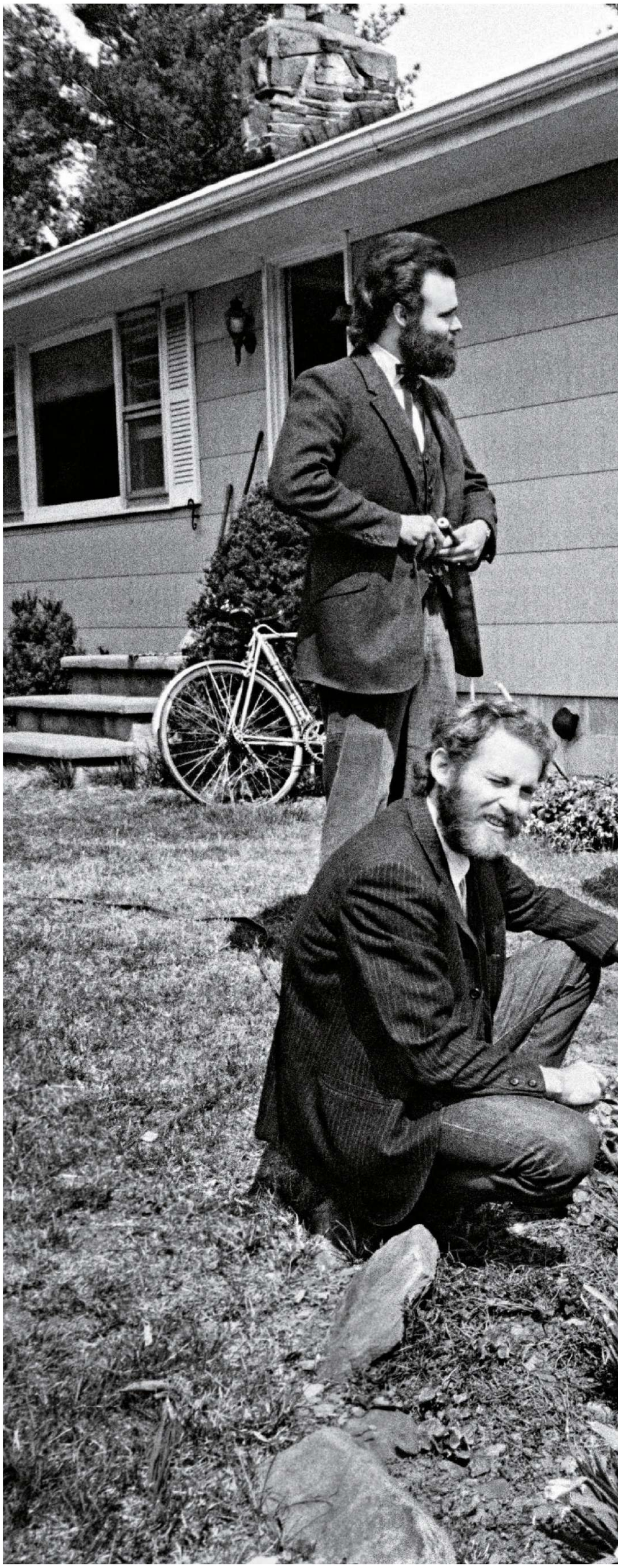
BACK TO BASICS

The Band's seminal album *Music from Big Pink* has been called the most influential in rock history.

On July 29, 1966, Bob Dylan may or may not have hurt himself in a motorcycle mishap while riding around Woodstock, New York, an artsy colony nestled in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. It depends on who is telling the story: Dylan either spun out of control after hitting an oil slick, was blinded by the sun, tipped over inexplicably, or, tired of touring, fabricated the whole episode so he could take a break from the road.

What isn't disputed is that Dylan retreated from view and canceled concerts—a decision that left his backup band, the Hawks, completely in the lurch. The Zelig-like quintet could play multiple styles but suddenly were unemployed with no prospects on the horizon. Then, early in 1967, Hawks bassist Rick Danko came across a salmon-colored tract house in West Saugerties, a few miles from Woodstock, and the band decided to rent it, dubbing the space "Big Pink," and work on their own music. The album they would release in 1968 as the Band was called *Music from Big Pink*, and with its rusty, backwoods sound, it would return rock to the basics. "That one record changed everything for me," Pink Floyd cofounder Roger Waters told the *Dallas Morning News* in 2008. "After *Sgt. Pepper*, it's the most influential record in the history of rock and roll."

Music from Big Pink hit record stores on July 1, 1968, at a moment when young people were ping-ponging between LSD, love-ins, antiwar protests, the folksy sounds of Simon & Garfunkel, and the acid strains of Jimi Hendrix.



HOME BOYS
From left, Levon Helm (crouching), Garth Hudson, Richard Manuel, Robbie Robertson, and Rick Danko at Big Pink in 1968. The house is now a vacation rental property.

Founded as an Arkansas-based rockabilly duo, the Band was an unlikely candidate to press the reset button for American rock and roll.

Simon & Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson" had dominated the charts the first half of June that year; the second half went to Herb Alpert's jazzy "This Guy's in Love with You." With its tangible sense of place, *Music from Big Pink* was something completely different. It was reimagined Americana—hillbilly, gospel, spirituals, blues, and soul rolled into one. Though record buyers didn't immediately appreciate the sound—the highest the album hit in 1968 was the top 30—industry insiders were bowled over.

Village Voice critic Robert Christgau would later write that *Music from Big Pink* was better than the Beatles' *Abbey Road*. *Rolling Stone* raved, "*Music from Big Pink* is an event and should be treated as one." After Eric Clapton heard a prerelease recording, he pulled the plug on his band Cream. The sound served as the foundation for the Grateful Dead and the Allman Brothers. "When it came out, people were like, 'Where in the world did this come from?' " the Band's guitarist Robbie Robertson told *Uncut* magazine. " 'What kind of music is this?' "

Even as backup for Dylan, the Band was an unlikely candidate to press the reset button for American rock and roll. Founded in the late 1950s as the Hawks by Levon Helm and Ronnie Hawkins, the Arkansas-based rockabilly duo soon migrated to Canada, where there was a growing market for their rustic sound. By the mid-1960s, the Hawks had picked up Danko, Robertson, pianist Richard Manuel, and organ player Garth Hudson but had also shed cofounder Hawkins. Mostly the Hawks were known for their versatility, but if the band had a consistent feature, it was volume. They traveled town to town doing club gigs and caught Dylan's attention in 1965, just after he went electric.

Perhaps the most attractive features of Big Pink were its oversize basement, large enough for the band to install a basic recording setup, and its domestic-but-in-the-middle-of-nowhere vibe. Soon, Dylan started dropping by to write, jam, and record tunes. Some days Beat poet Allen Ginsberg would show up with his companion, the poet Peter Orlovsky, and a harmonium. Other days it was jazz musician Charles Lloyd. The music the Band worked on reflected what they were listening to—everything from the Staple Singers to tunes from the Mississippi Delta—and a new anti-road lifestyle. The men slept late, drank coffee, and headed to the basement to play. During downtime, they threw a football, walked in the woods, or played checkers.

By January 1968, the Band was ready to go into a studio and cut an album, which started with "Tears of Rage," an elegy that alluded to the war in Vietnam and reflected all that the band had been doing at Big Pink. Other tracks were slow, dramatic, harmonious, and voice-driven. "The Weight," a biblical tale set in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, where Martin guitars are made, and "Yazoo Street Scandal," about a street in Arkansas, were personal to the Band,

OUTDOOR JAM
From left, Danko, Helm, Hudson, and Robertson at Manuel and Hudson's house above the Ashokan reservoir in Ulster County, New York.

like so much of their music, reflecting the influences of Canada and the Delta.

Upon the record's release, it was clear the Band stood apart from the rest of the rock world just from the packaging. The front-cover art was a Gauguin-esque painting by Dylan. On the inside, the Band appeared in short hair, bowlers, and mustaches, looking like the Dalton Gang. There was no caption and no information about who had contributed what. Because Danko was in an accident around the time of the release, the band did little promotion. Instead, the LP's songs of sadness, doubt, and redemption at a price caught on largely through word of mouth.

"*Big Pink* became its own category," Al Kooper, a keyboard player who performed with Dylan in the studio and on tour, told *Uncut*. "People still say about other bands, 'That sorta sounds like the Band,' and I always reply, 'Yeah, sorta!' But no one else has ever had the writing, arrangement or similar vocal prowess to really compete with it." ■

BEE GEES

FIRST WAVE

Before the Gibb brothers became disco kings, they scored a hit with "I've Gotta Get a Message to You."

Long before the gold chains, the disco attire, and the scent of YSL Rive Gauche, the Bee Gees were three British brothers riding high on their second big hit, 1968's "I've Gotta Get a Message to You."

It was an unexpected first-wave success. In the early days, Maurice, Robin, and Barry Gibb were known as the BGs, because Barry and an early promoter shared the initials B.G. And they were known for a too-familiar sound: After their first recording, "New York Mining Disaster 1941," came out in 1967, rumor had it the BGs were actually the Beatles, with BG standing for "Beatles Group." Then the rebranded Bee Gees released "I've Gotta Get a Message to You," and radio deejays got on board.

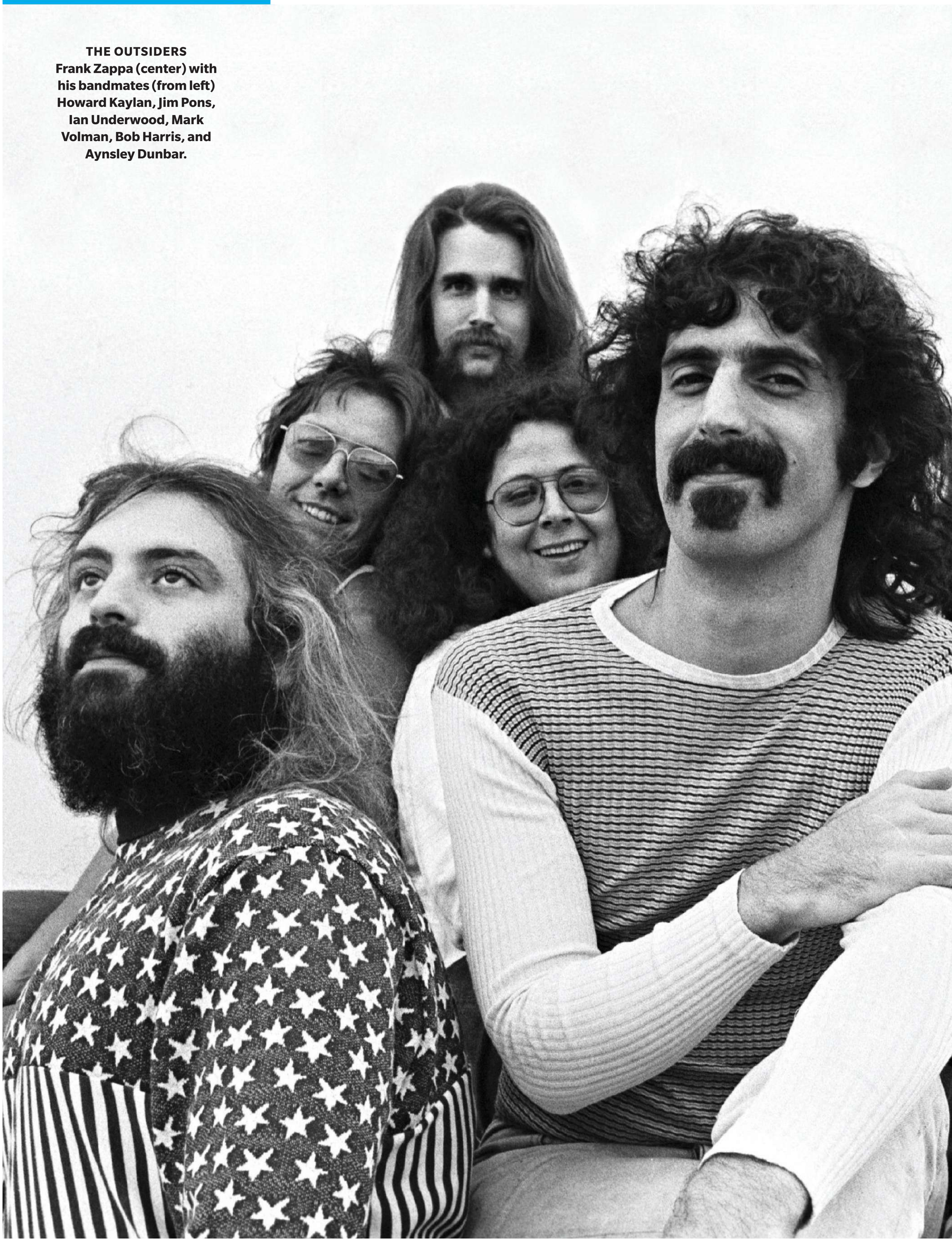
The tale of a man on death row trying to communicate with his wife, "I've Gotta Get a Message to You," like many of the Gibbs' recordings, was composed on the spot in the studio. "It was like acting, you see, we said, let's pretend that somebody, his life is on the line, somebody's going to the chair," Robin wrote in the liner notes for *Idea*, the 1968 album that included "I've Gotta Get a Message to You." "What would be going through their mind? Let's not make it doom and gloom but sort of an appeal to the person he loves." It was catchy and different, and it went to No. 1 in the U.K. and No. 8 in the U.S.

The song was the capstone to a strong year, which included a tour in Germany where the Bee Gees were met by screaming fans waving Union Jacks. The reception would be eclipsed by the fame the group achieved in the 1970s as the kings of disco. That made the Bee Gees massive—a success that somehow worked against them with critics. The siblings were ridiculed in the media and in the early 1980s were even parodied by a spoof group, the Hee Bee Gee Bees, in a track titled "Meaningless Songs (in Very High Voices)." Not that fans cared. In the four decades the group sang together, they sold more than 250 million records. ■

SUITED FOR THE TASK
The Bee Gees—from left, Maurice, Barry, and Robin Gibb—performed on the BBC TV show *Top of the Pops* in 1968, with Colin Petersen on drums.

WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

THE OUTSIDERS
Frank Zappa (center) with his bandmates (from left) Howard Kaylan, Jim Pons, Ian Underwood, Mark Volman, Bob Harris, and Aynsley Dunbar.



THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION

THE REAL THING

Frank Zappa was called the Lenny Bruce of rock and roll. And the Allen Ginsberg. And the Franz Kafka.

As 1968 rolled onto the calendar, the music world was still agog at *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the Beatles' inventive concept album released the previous spring. Bands were rushing to piggyback on the LP's psychedelic sound. The media were swooning and fans fell in line, embracing the Beatles as spokesmen for the counterculture. Singularly unimpressed by the whole endeavor: Los Angeles rockers Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention.

Zappa's reaction was completely in character. A music-industry outsider and antiauthoritarian, Zappa was closer in worldview to social satirist Lenny Bruce or Beat poet Allen Ginsberg than to pop-culture icons Paul McCartney and John Lennon. His albums were kind of jazzy, kind of rock-y, with funny lyrics and weird song titles—"My Guitar Wants to Kill Your Mama"—that often mystified record buyers (who, as a result, often did not buy Mothers albums).

Zappa's answer to *Sgt. Pepper* was *We're Only in It for the Money*, a parody released in March that skewered the Beatles, their hippie fans, and mainstream Americans as narrow-minded phonies. The cover lampooned the much-praised *Sgt. Pepper* cover collage, with head shots of celebrities like Edgar Allan Poe and Fred Astaire. Zappa was front and center, in a frilly collared dress and pigtails. He was surrounded by figures including Lee Harvey Oswald as he was being killed and Lyndon Johnson wearing Lennon-esque granny glasses. Instead of flowers to spell out the band name, à la *Sgt. Pepper*, Zappa used fruit and vegetables.

We're Only in It's music, too, was mocking. Part art rock and part symphonic pop, the album made fun of longhairs who wore peace signs and beads, but who didn't care about the social positions the look was supposed to represent. ■

BLUE CHEER

METAL'S MOMENT

In the long-running debate over which was the first heavy metal band, San Francisco's Blue Cheer often get the nod because they released their first album in 1968. But they had lots of company.

In the chew-'em-up, spit-'em-out scene that was rock and roll in early 1968, it was time for the next big thing. The Beatles had dispensed with matching suits and pretty, pleasing melodies on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The Stones had cornered the anger angle. Jimi Hendrix and Pete Townshend were burning and smashing guitars. But fatalism . . . fatalism was wide-open—and into the maw stomped heavy metal in all its antisocial, earsplitting glory.

Who gets credit as metal's inventor and when exactly it came into being have been argued for decades. Date-wise, much can be traced to 1968. That's the year San Francisco's Blue Cheer, three metalheads who named their band after a variety of LSD, released their throbbing first album, *Vincebus Eruptum*. It's also when Canadian rockers Steppenwolf gave a name to the new sound—"heavy metal thunder"—in their launch recording, *Steppenwolf*. Later in '68, Iron Butterfly contributed "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," the 17-minute noisefest that is considered a bridge to metal. And Vanilla Fudge, who would influence the Nice, Deep Purple, Yes, and Led Zeppelin, released the metal-inflected *The Beat Goes On*, which didn't have any songs but instead was a collection of sounds, mantras, and voice recordings of world leaders.

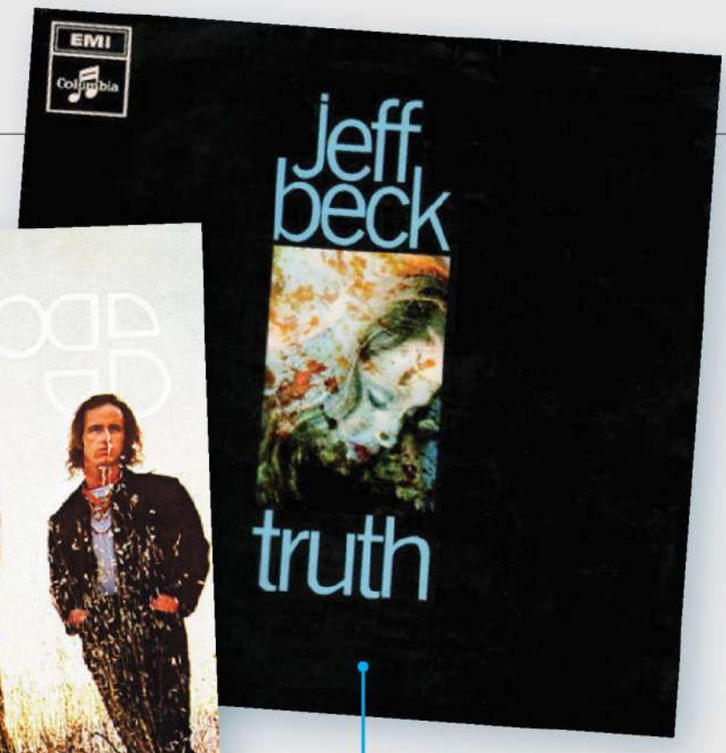
"Who invented heavy metal?" asked cultural critic Joe Queenan in the *Guardian* a few years back. "It is like the debate over whether the same person wrote both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and whether the enigmatic poet we refer to as Homer even knew how to write." The who is just not important, concluded Queenan, and anyway, most people haven't thought about Homer since high school.

Truth be told, metal was in the air even before '68. The influential British blues group the Yardbirds, known for their instrumental "rave-ups," proved to be fertile breeding ground. From 1963 to 1968, the band trained guitarist Jimmy Page, a Yardbird for three years before he founded Led Zeppelin. Jeff Beck, who joined the Yardbirds after the departure of Eric Clapton, teamed up with singer Rod Stewart and future Rolling Stone Ron Wood in 1968 to produce *Truth*, with a furious 40 minutes of heavy metal instrumentation. So metal was on its way when TV host Steve Allen introduced Blue Cheer to his audience in March. "Ladies and gentlemen," Allen announced with a flourish. "Blue Cheer—run for your lives!" ■

A BLUE PERIOD
From left, Blue Cheer bassist and lead singer Dickie Peterson, guitarist Randy Holden, and drummer Paul Whaley at Stinson Beach in Northern California.

10 ALBUMS THAT DEFINED THE YEAR

Long-playing records were just beginning to overtake 45s with fans and in music stores.



TRUTH
JEFF BECK

Guitarist Jeff Beck's debut album is memorable not only for the talent of his backup band—which included singer Rod Stewart and future Rolling Stone Ron Wood—but also for Beck's eclectic, metal-inspired vision. Wedged in between Chicago blues songs "You Shook Me" and "I Ain't Superstitious" are covers of "Ol' Man River" and the Tudor-period "Greensleeves." The album's reputation has only grown over the years, with British magazine *Classic Rock* describing it as "a miracle of fury and berserk beauty."

WAITING FOR THE SUN
THE DOORS

The story of the unobtained American Dream, *Waiting for the Sun* was released at the height of the Doors' popularity, but it was by no means the band's best-reviewed work. "After a year and a half of Jim Morrison's posturing one might logically hope for some sort of musical growth," wrote *Rolling Stone* at the time, "and if the new record isn't really terrible, it isn't particularly exciting either." Fans loved it anyway, and *Waiting for the Sun* became the Doors' first and only No. 1 album, powered in part by the diversity of the tracks and the smash hit "Hello, I Love You."

MUSIC FROM BIG PINK
THE BAND

With this remarkable debut, four Canadians and a drummer from Arkansas who'd been playing backup for Bob Dylan redirected the trajectory of American rock. The 11 tracks of *Music from Big Pink*, named for the house where the Band developed the material, were folksier, bluesier, and more personal than the prevailing psychedelia, and the music world took note. Among the cuts was "The Weight"—about a visitor to Nazareth, Pennsylvania—considered by many to be one of the most influential songs in American pop.

THE COVER OF MUSIC FROM BIG PINK IS A PAINTING BY BOB DYLAN.

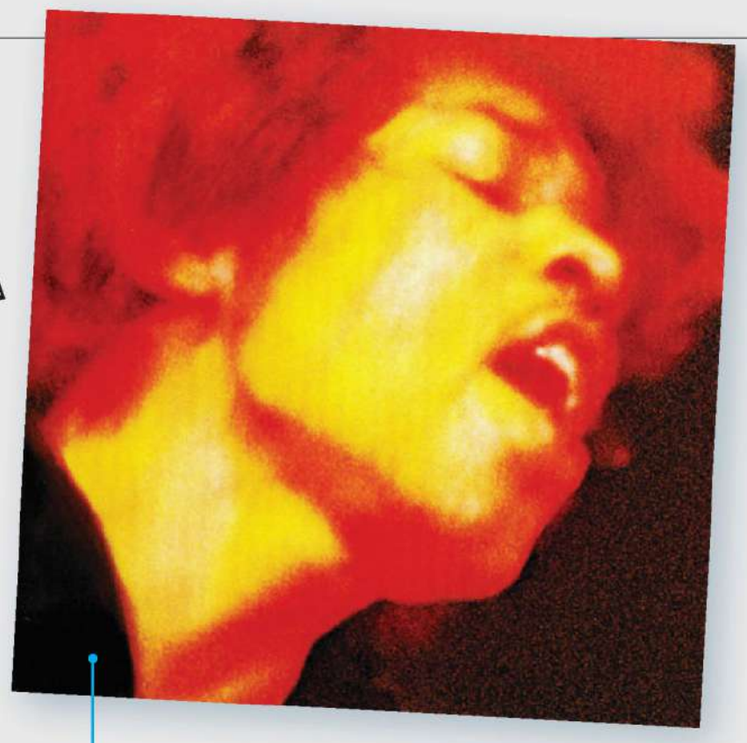
BOOKENDS
SIMON & GARFUNKEL

In 1968, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel were both just 26, but with *Bookends*, they were already tackling old age. The album went to No. 1 in the U.S. and made the childhood friends the most famous duo in rock. It also showed off the delicate interplay of their voices and Simon's dexterity as a songwriter: On "Mrs. Robinson," he slipped in a non sequitur nod to the Yankees ("Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?") and an homage to the Beatles, with "coo-coo-ca-choo" taken from "I Am the Walrus."

ODESSEY AND ORACLE
THE ZOMBIES

The Zombies (1964's "She's Not There") from Britain were consummate but underappreciated songwriters. When the band's contract with Decca expired in 1967, they signed with CBS to produce one more record, *Odessey and Oracle*, today considered a landmark of pop/psychedelia. Yet in 1968, the album came and went in the U.K. without a hiccup and only got airplay in the U.S. thanks to lobbying from rocker Al Kooper. By then, it was too late. The Zombies had split for good.

HENDRIX HATED THE ORIGINAL ART FOR* ELECTRIC LADYLAND, *A PHOTO OF NAKED WOMEN.



ELECTRIC LADYLAND
THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

Like the Beatles' White Album, released a month later, Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* marked the beginning of a musical end. The album was the first for Hendrix in which money was not an issue, and he took complete advantage, rerecording song after song until each was perfect. His cover of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" was so insightful that Dylan began performing Hendrix's interpretation. But Hendrix's longtime manager Chas Chandler, frustrated by the repeated takes and profligate spending, quit the Experience, and Hendrix argued with bassist and vocalist Noel Redding, who would leave the group in 1969.

THE BEATLES
THE BEATLES

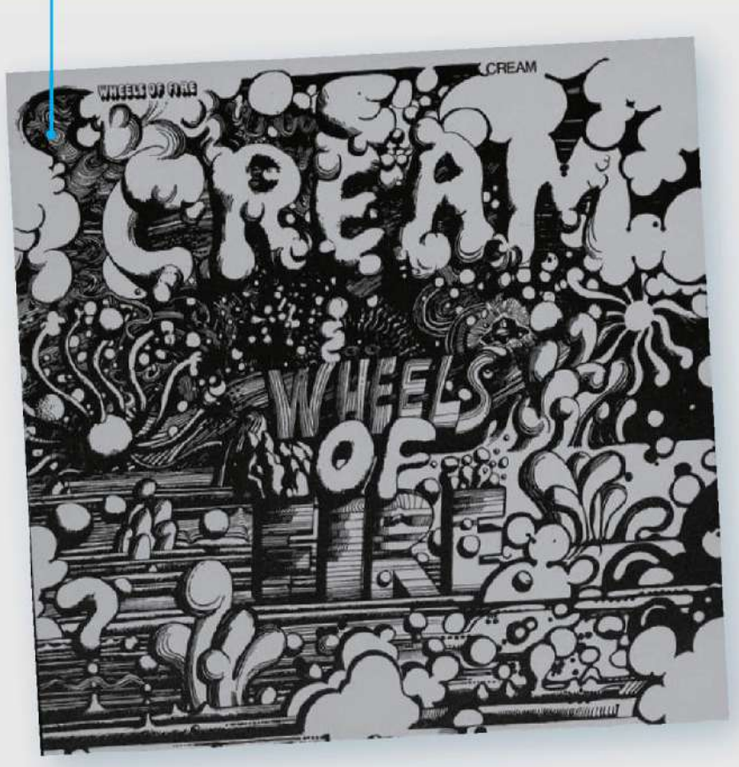
The recording sessions for the Beatles' ninth studio album pointed to the final days of the Fab Four. Ringo Starr, feeling excluded by his bandmates, stormed out and headed to Sardinia for two weeks. The presence of John Lennon's new lover, Yoko Ono, frayed nerves. George Harrison, angry that the band wasn't taking his song "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" seriously, recruited Eric Clapton to come in and play on the track. But in the end, the disparate songs came together for one of the most surprising and adventurous rock recordings ever made. "I think it was a very good album," Paul McCartney said later. "It stood up, but it wasn't a pleasant one to make."

BEGGARS BANQUET
THE ROLLING STONES

After the disaster that was 1967's *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (a trip into psychedelia à la *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*), the Stones needed a reboot, and *Beggars Banquet* was it. Hailed as a return to the band's R&B roots, the album was raw, rude, and arrogant and produced the instant classics "Jumpin' Jack Flash," "Sympathy for the Devil," and "Street Fighting Man." Although *Beggars Banquet* was the last album with full involvement from Brian Jones, it kicked off one of the most creative periods of the Stones' history and cemented their reputation as the world's greatest rock and roll band.

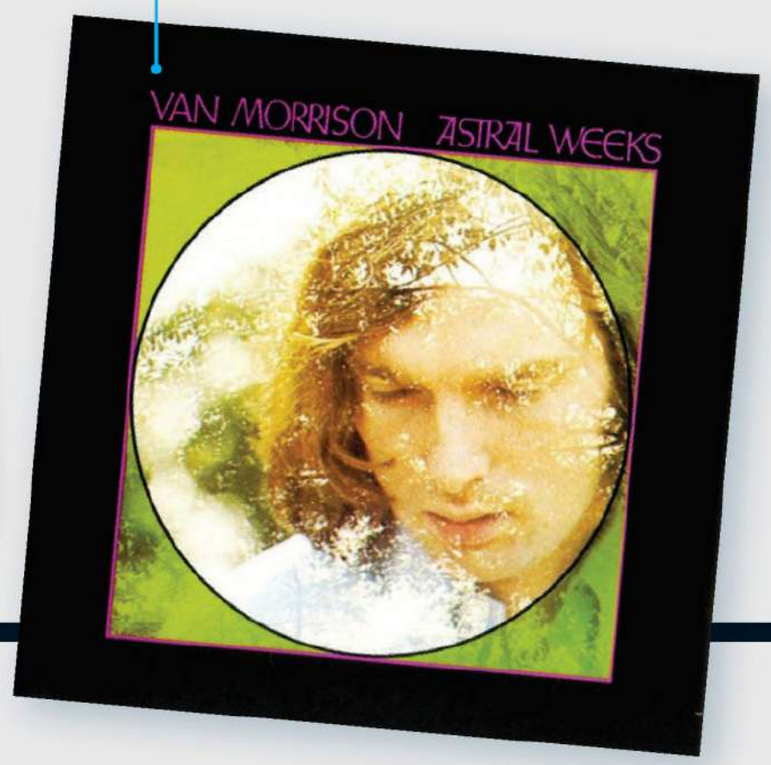
WHEELS OF FIRE
CREAM

Fans of supergroup Cream scored a twofer with *Wheels of Fire*, a double album with one disc dedicated to studio recordings—including "White Room," one of Cream's best ever—and the other to the group's famously raucous live performances. Among those: 16-minute drum solo "Toad" and a cover of Robert Johnson's "Crossroads," about the place where Johnson supposedly sold his soul to the devil. Though Cream influenced bands from Led Zeppelin to Rush, *Wheels of Fire* was their only No. 1 album.



ASTRAL WEEKS
VAN MORRISON

During the making of this seminal album, Morrison, 23, lived up to his reputation as aloof and moody, speaking only to studio technicians. Having already achieved pop stardom as the lead singer of Them, the Irish troubadour seemed to be set on reinvention—and he achieved it. The songs on *Astral Weeks* were completely unlike Morrison's prior hits "Brown Eyed Girl" and "Gloria," and the music was a hybrid: Celtic R&B, hallucinatory, raw, emotional, and intense. Confused fans didn't know what to make of it, and initial sales were tepid, but over time *Astral Weeks* morphed from oddity to cult favorite to rock classic.



UP IN ARMS
In December 1968, Diana Ross (right) and fellow Supremes Cindy Birdsong (left) and Mary Wilson costarred with the Temptations on the NBC special *TCB* ("Taking Care of Business"). The two groups were Motown's most popular at the time.

MOTOWN MOJO

It was a transitional year for Hitsville U.S.A. as the label's artists explored more topical, darker material.

The glamour was gone. When Diana Ross and the Supremes appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on September 29, 1968, there wasn't a sequined dress in sight, no trademark bouffant wigs, no stiletto heels. The normally resplendent Ross wore a baggy yellow sweatshirt; the other Supremes, Mary Wilson and Cindy Birdsong, earth-toned leisure wear. All three were barefoot.

And then came the musical number. Instead of cooing about harmony and symphonies, Motown's sweethearts debuted "Love Child," a somber warning against premarital sex. "It was the '60s," Ross said later of the decision to "go ghetto" on the show. "Life was moving and everything had to change, our music included." Record buyers seemed to agree. Three weeks after "Love Child" was released, it reached the pop chart's top 10. On November 30, 1968, it toppled the Beatles' "Hey Jude" from its No. 1 perch.

For the decade's most tumultuous year, there was a new Motown in town. Out were the sunny, tambourine-inflected love songs that had made stars out of the Temptations, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Gladys Knight and the Pips, and Martha and the Vandellas. In were a harder, darker outlook and psychedelic soul. The label was experimenting with instrumentals over vocals and social issues over puppy love. Some members of the Motown family, unhappy with the direction, broke away, while Berry Gordy, Motown's visionary founder, turned his attention to film and television production and moved cross-country to Los Angeles.

The upheaval in many ways was inevitable. The late 1960s were not the placid late 1950s, in Detroit or anywhere else in the country. The Motor City had twice erupted into deadly racial confrontations, first in 1967 after white police raided an unlicensed bar and set off the most violent uprising on ,U.S. soil since the 1863 draft riots, and again in 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Motown itself seemed to be coming apart at the seams. After a nasty battle over profit sharing and

IN SYNC
At left, Ross, Florence Ballard, and Wilson; below, from left, Dennis Edwards, Melvin Franklin, Paul Williams, Otis Williams, and Eddie Kendricks of the Temptations.

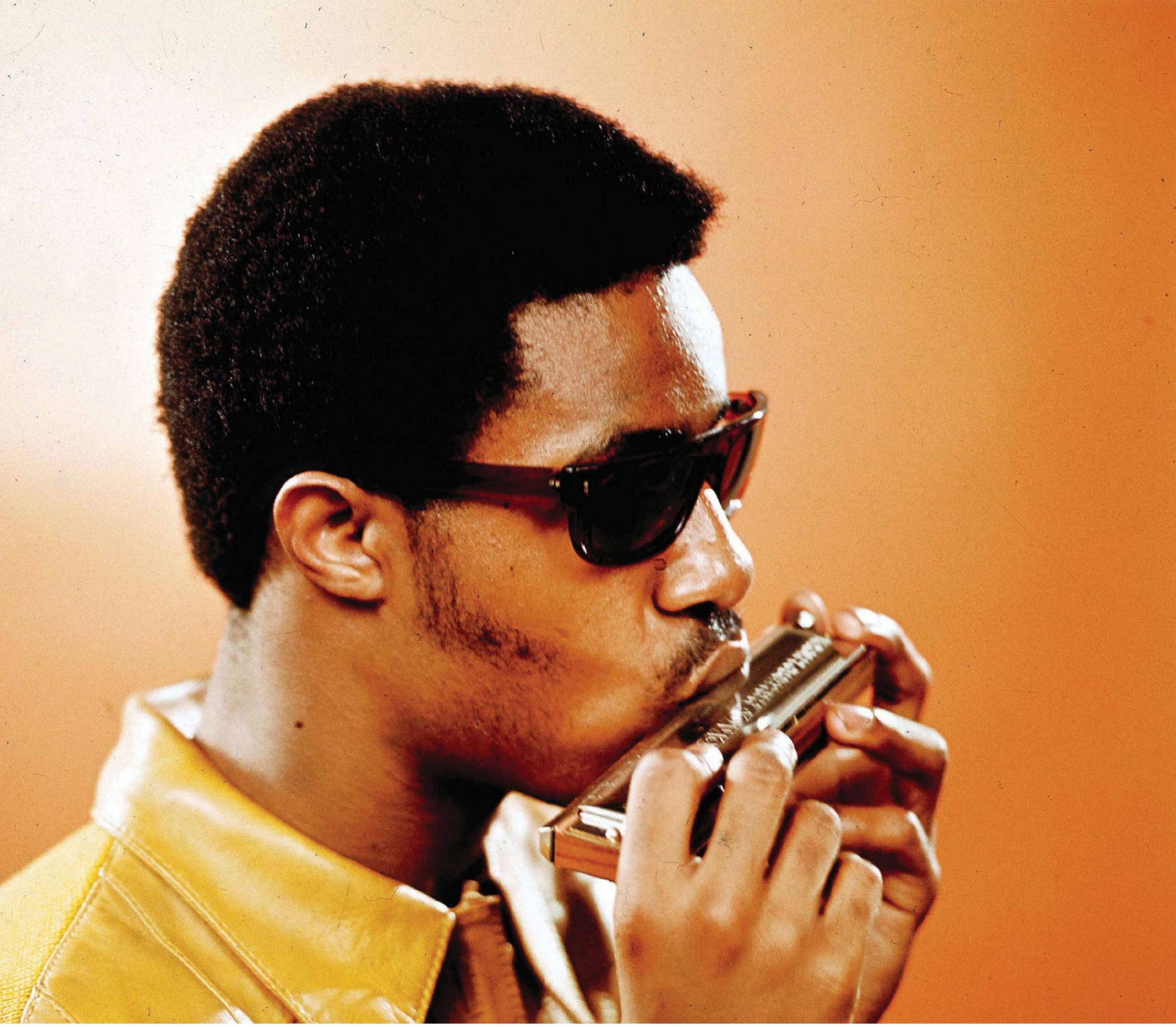
HIT MAKERS
The former Motown songwriting team of, from left, Lamont Dozier and brothers Brian and Eddie Holland, circa 1970. The men left Motown in 1967 after writing some of the label's biggest hits, including "Stop! In the Name of Love." Bottom right, Martha and the Vandellas, in Chicago's Bud Billiken Day parade, celebrated African American culture.

THE ALBUM'S FIRST TRACKS WERE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS, BUT THE REST WERE MORE UPBEAT.

royalties in late 1967, the company severed ties with the power-writing trio of Holland-Dozier-Holland. Lawsuits would follow. The Temptations fired their cocaine-addicted star, David Ruffin. Gordy himself forced out the Supremes' erratic cofounder Florence Ballard. The Isley Brothers, feeling ignored, defected. Singer Marvin Gaye later remarked that the only bright spot in 1968 had been the Detroit Tigers' come-from-behind win over the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series.

"For the most part, the Motown family as we had known it, was over," wrote Supreme Mary Wilson in her autobiography about the events of 1968. "Our home base was . . . being dismantled."

When Gordy launched Motown in 1959, he was a 29-year-old former boxer, autoworker, and songwriter. Encouraged by a friend, the singer Smokey Robinson, Gordy borrowed $800 from his family and opened shop in a cluster of recording studios, informally dubbed Hitsville U.S.A., on West Grand Boulevard on the outskirts of Detroit. The "Mo" in Motown was short for Motor, as in



Motor City, and "town" because Gordy felt his Detroit was more like a small village. Over the next 10 years, he would nurture a roster of chart-topping artists who would change popular culture through songs such as "Shop Around," "My Girl," "Heat Wave," and "Stop! In the Name of Love."

Much of Motown's success had to do with the unique setup on West Grand and the absolute control Gordy exercised over his musicians. It is said he modeled his hit factory after the Detroit car assembly line he knew so well: Make a good product, then make something similar, and make it quick. There were daily meetings where songwriters and producers would listen to and critique one another's work. Once a track made the cut, Motown would try it out with different artists. Singles were far more important than albums, and it was common for more than one band to release the same song recorded in a different way.

Motown owned all of the music and the performances of all its artists and also managed their careers, giving the label a virtual monopoly over the musicians' output. Performers were required to attend classes in deportment given by Maxine Powell, the director of Motown's artistic-development department. Under Powell's tutelage, singers learned proper diction and posture, how to glide instead of walk, how to sit properly in a limousine. I am preparing you for two invitations, Powell told her charges: to the White House and to Buckingham Palace. "I teach class," Powell said often. "And class will turn the heads of kings and queens."

In time, Motown grew into the largest Black-owned enterprise in the country and embodied the opportunities

for African Americans that civil rights protesters were demanding in the streets. It played a key role in desegregating entertainment culture and breaking down barriers between Blacks and whites. Motown's songs and artists entered U.S. homes, regardless of color. They encouraged Blacks and whites to sing and dance together. The lyrics were apolitical, but the records communicated a vision. "White people want to be loved too," Gordy told the *Telegraph* in 2016. "White people want money. I wanted songs for the whites, blacks, the Jews, Gentiles, the cops and the robbers. I wanted everybody to enjoy my music."

As the 1960s wore on, however, Motown's feel-good message began to ring naive and outdated. Black artists with other labels—Curtis Mayfield, James Brown, Nina Simone—were tackling racism, oppression, and injustice. Motown musicians wanted to do the same. Gordy worried that recalibrating the label's distinctive formula might backfire, so he sat on a number of singles that much later would turn out to be huge hits. Among those he opposed: Stevie Wonder's version of the antiwar anthem "Blowin' in the Wind" (it eventually went to No. 1 on the R&B chart and No. 9 on pop); Wonder's "For Once in My Life," which

GOLDEN YEARS
Stevie Wonder, opposite, seen in the late 1960s, learned the harmonica, piano, and drums by the time he was 9. At right, Marvin Gaye with Motown executive Barney Ales and a gold disc for "I Heard It Through the Grapevine."

BAND OF BROTHERS
The Jackson 5 circa 1968, the year the group first auditioned for Motown. From left, Tito, Marlon, Jackie, Jermaine, and Michael.

Before Berry Gordy heard the Jackson 5 audition, he was wary. "I didn't want any more kids groups. I just wanted to focus on all of the other stars that we had."

rose to No. 2 on both charts; and "Cloud Nine," inspired by Sly Stone's "Dance to the Music," which Gordy concluded endorsed getting high. "I said that was a drug record and I didn't want to put it out," Gordy commented years later. "[My staff] outvoted me. I was very, very upset."

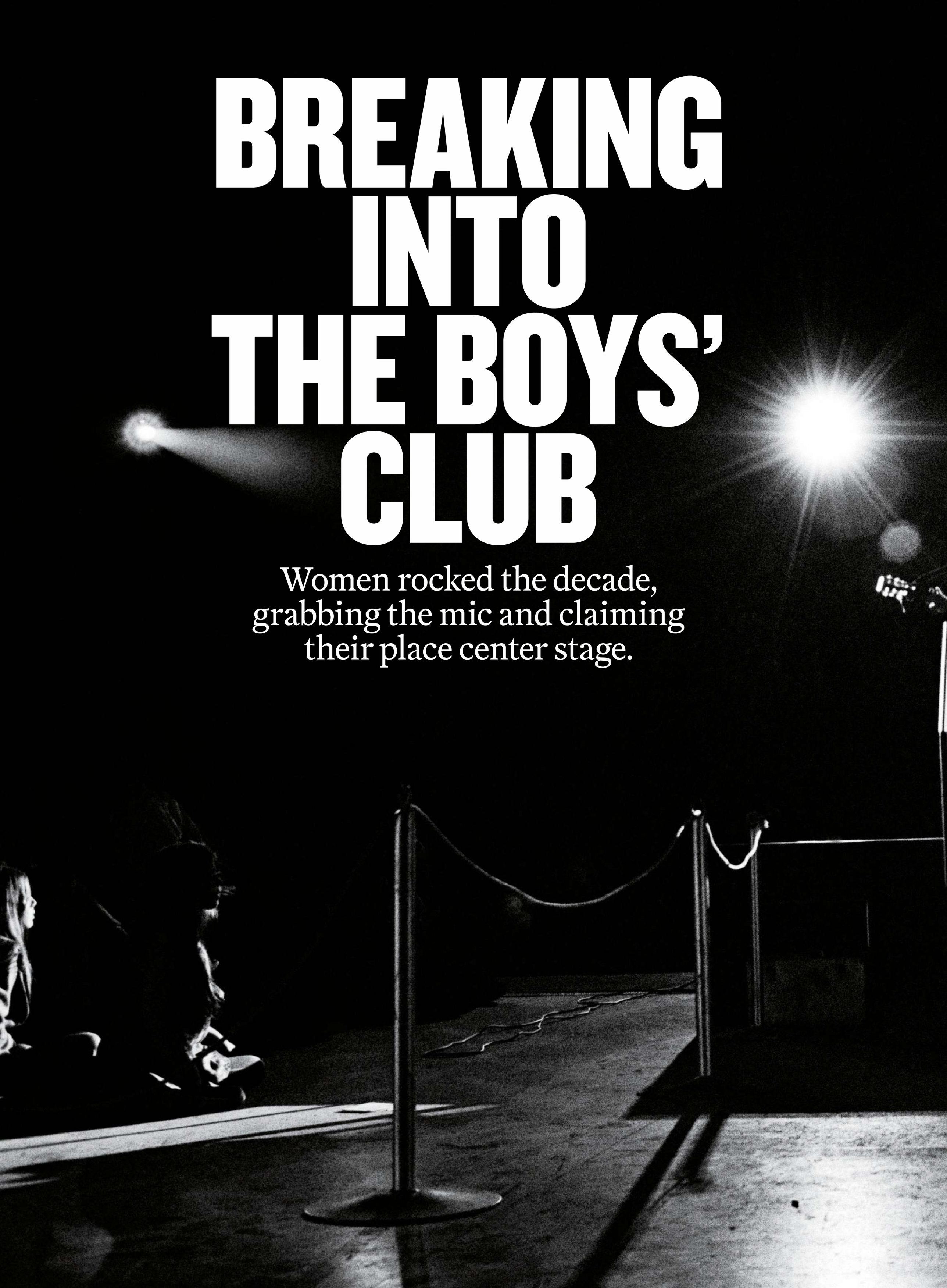
Gordy initially even refused to release Marvin Gaye's now-iconic "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." The song was based on the expression "through the grapevine," which dated to the Civil War era, when slaves, prohibited from learning to read, communicated via the "grapevine telegraph." But when Gaye recorded it in 1967 for an album, Gordy found it too dark and moody, refused to put it on the market as a single, and famously referred to it as the worst song he had ever heard. It wasn't until 1968, when the LP was released in August and a deejay began giving "Grapevine" airplay, that Berry relented. He put out Gaye's "Grapevine" as a single in October. It went to No. 1—becoming Motown's biggest seller.

By that point, Gordy had moved to Los Angeles hoping to expand Motown's presence in the television and film industries. But midyear he (reluctantly) heard an audition by five young brothers from Gary, Indiana, that would transition Motown to the next stage. "I didn't want any more kids groups. I just wanted to concentrate on all of the other stars that we had," Gordy told *Time* magazine years later. "I had Stevie Wonder . . . and he had to have an entourage and tutors and he could only work so many hours and there were so many restrictions." Gordy's creative assistant insisted that he attend the audition, and after the siblings performed a number of tunes, including the Smokey Robinson track "Who's Lovin' You," he was convinced. The lead, 9-year-old Michael, performed Robinson's hit "like he had been living that song for 50 years." Three days later, Gordy signed the Jackson 5.

So as 1969 approached, Motown seemed to have weathered the transition and come out in a better place. In addition to signing the Jackson 5, the company had scored five top 10 singles, including "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," "For Once in My Life," and "Love Child." In 1969, Motown would win its first Grammy with "Cloud Nine." The label was ready for its next act. ■

BREAKING INTO THE BOYS' CLUB

Women rocked the decade, grabbing the mic and claiming their place center stage.



CENTER STAGE
Joan Baez performed at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1968.

JANIS JOPLIN

LARGER THAN LIFE

For a brief moment, the Texas-born blues phenomenon shared rock's spotlight with Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix. Then came the Southern Comfort and heroin.

For Janis Joplin, Monday, February 19, was not an atypical day for 1968. In the morning, the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* both published rave reviews of the singer's East Coast premiere, dubbing the 25-year-old from Texas a new pop-music talent. In the afternoon, Joplin and her psychedelic-blues-rock band, Big Brother and the Holding Company, signed a record deal with CBS Records president Clive Davis. Moments later, Joplin propositioned the music mogul for sex, suggesting the act would seal their new recording deal—an offer Davis declined.

"For her, it was the event of a lifetime, the culmination of her professional dream," Davis, unfazed, explained later. "For a mere signature to be taking place between the two of us seemed an inadequate expression of the event."

There was little that was predictable about the jagged-voiced, large-living, drug-addicted Janis Joplin except perhaps her death by overdose in 1970. But two years earlier, in 1968, Joplin paused between her ascent and descent to glow assertively in the spotlight. With Big Brother, she began recording *Cheap Thrills*, an album that went gold before it went on sale because of massive advance orders. Joplin became a media darling, fawned over in both the mainstream and alternative press. She was so successful for CBS, she "extorted" a lynx coat from the label. ("What a hustle! Can you imagine? Getting paid for passing out for two years!") 1968 was also the year the Port Arthur, Texas, native began using heroin, and a bottle of Southern Comfort became her constant companion. In September, she broke with Big Brother, ambitious to form her own group. Six months later, after some tepid reviews of her new blues band, *Rolling Stone* wondered where Joplin was headed in a cover story, JANIS: THE JUDY GARLAND OF ROCK?

In the boys-only club of '60s rock and roll, Joplin for a brief moment shared the world stage with Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix as the most unlikely of breakthrough artists. With her nest of tangled hair and acne scars, she was not conventionally pretty. She also didn't sing so much as she wailed. But stomping, quivering, and swooping through songs, she delivered a clear message: "Get off your butt and feel things," as she told *Time* magazine. Joplin liberated regular girls from the need to emulate the perfectly coiffed

TRIPPY WHEELS

Janis Joplin bought a 1964 Porsche 356 and had it painted with birds, butterflies, floating eyes, mushrooms, and skull-like faces. In 2015 it sold at auction for $1.76 million.

BEVERLY HILLS
CALIFORNIA
VAN 990

young female singers who had come before her, from Lesley Gore to Mary Wells. For men, she was the irresistible one-of-the-guys kind of chick. "When she got it on at a concert, she got it on with everybody," wrote rock critic Ellen Willis in *Rolling Stone*.

By any measure, 1968 got off to a glorious start for Joplin. The contract with CBS awarded the band a $150,000 advance. She was shot by fashion photographer Richard Avedon for *Vogue*, which anointed her the "leading woman" in rock. She was written about in *Glamour*, *Billboard*, *New York,* and *Time* magazines. Her happiness was reflected in the letters she wrote home to her parents. "From all indications I'm going to become rich & famous. Incredible!" Joplin wrote after her first reviews were published. "Wow, I'm so lucky—I just fumbled around being a mixed-up kid (& young adult) & then I fell into this. And finally, it looks like something is going to work for me. Incredible. Well, pin the review up so everyone can see—I'm so proud."

Yet the joy high was short-lived. During the recording sessions for *Cheap Thrills*, which started in March and continued through June, troubles cropped up quickly. Joplin's energy was raw and powerful. She would try different screams, saying that "this is the way Tina Turner would do it" or "this is how Big Mama Thornton would do it." At the same time, she was also the wild card whose binge drinking and arguments with the other band members about arrangements could derail a session. By June, the band had recorded 200 reels of tape but nothing that producer John Simon thought was good enough to use. He quit and insisted he not be credited as a producer. Joplin was "loud," "drunk," and a mess, Simon told the Library of Congress in 2015. "Patchouli on the outside and Southern Comfort on the inside."

After Simon departed, Columbia brought on house producer Elliot Mazer to edit and mix all the recorded tapes

THE GANG'S ALL HERE
Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company arrived in New York City in 1968. The band spent the late spring recording *Cheap Thrills*. Opposite, Joplin performed at the Fillmore East.

into an album. The final product, with Joplin classics including "Piece of My Heart," a nine-minute version of "Ball and Chain," and a cover of George Gershwin's "Summertime," sold over a million copies in just the first month. Billing of the band went from "Big Brother and the Holding Company" to "Big Brother and the Holding Company featuring Janis Joplin" to "Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company." Joplin was mobbed on the streets, and soon her manager, Albert Grossman, was pushing her to ditch Big Brother and go it alone. In September he announced an "amicable split" between Joplin and the band, and they played their last gig in December.

Joplin's Kozmic Blues Band debuted at a concert event in Memphis to a cool reception. Snarky reviews began to appear. Ralph Gleason, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, suggested that Janis should "go back to Big Brother, if they'll have her." Within a year Kozmic Blues Band would disband. Joplin would form one more group, the Full Tilt Boogie Band. Her last hit was "Me and Bobby McGee," which went to No. 1 after her death on October 4, 1970. ■

Joplin was the wild card whose binge drinking and arguments with the other band members could derail a recording session.

BREAKING INTO THE BOYS' CLUB

INSPIRING COMPANY
Laura Nyro relaxed with fellow songwriter Stephen Sondheim in his New York City home in 1968.

LAURA NYRO

SONGBIRD

The singer and writer was known for her confessional style and the hits she composed for other artists.

It's one of the most influential albums of the late 1960s, inspiring artists from Tori Amos to Elton John and responsible for embedding the singles "Stoned Soul Picnic" and "Eli's Coming" in the pop-music catalog. But when singer-songwriter Laura Nyro released her second album, *Eli and the Thirteenth Confession*, in March 1968, the LP barely registered so much as a thud. It peaked at No. 181 on *Billboard*'s chart, it sold just 125,000 copies, and critics seemed to barely notice it.

The reception was not atypical for Nyro, an outlier in the late '60s whose sound was eccentric and whose lyrics were profoundly advanced. Along with Joni Mitchell, she was a pioneer of the freewheeling confessional genre of songwriting that grew out of the folk-music scene, and like Mitchell, she could perform and write both the music and the lyrics. For *Eli and the Thirteenth Confession*, Nyro additionally recorded her own harmonies, in essence singing with herself—a technique that would become a signature.

"She had a kaleidoscopic musical sensibility that fused elements of folk, soul, gospel and Broadway tradition into intensely introspective songs," wrote the *New York Times* when Nyro died of ovarian cancer at age 49 in 1997, noting that she also helped introduce the genre of "blue-eyed soul."

Yet Nyro never had a gold album or a hit single. Instead she was mostly known as a singer-songwriter who wrote chart-toppers for others. Her "Stoned Soul Picnic" was a hit for the Fifth Dimension. Barbra Streisand took "Stoney End" to the No. 6 spot on the *Billboard* Hot 100. "Eli's Coming" went to No. 10 for Three Dog Night. Peter, Paul and Mary and Blood, Sweat and Tears both scored with covers of "And When I Die"—a song that was cited upon her death as providing a fitting epitaph for a woman who had become a pantheist: "I can swear there ain't no heaven and I pray there ain't no hell." ■

ARETHA FRANKLIN

AMERICA'S SOUL

After singing Thomas Dorsey's "Precious Lord" at the funeral of Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin eclipsed her father, a well-known Baptist minister, as the voice of the Black community.

Taking the stage at Amsterdam's historic concert hall in May 1968, Aretha Franklin had every reason to expect an enthusiastic reception. The 26-year-old with a growing reputation as the Queen of Soul had just released a new album, which in turn followed a string of Top 10 hits. But what the singer likely was unprepared for was this: As she launched into a blues version of the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction," ecstatic concertgoers, unimpeded by security, rushed the stage, pelted her with flowers, and receded only after the emcee stepped onstage to urge calm. Today, invariably, there is a single word used to characterize the concert: legendary.

If 1967 was a pivotal moment for Franklin's career—the year she switched to Atlantic Records, partnered with producer Jerry Wexler, and traveled to Alabama for the famous Muscle Shoals Sound Studio recording session—then 1968 was the year she arrived as a full-blown star. Franklin's first European tour put her on the map with world audiences. In performing at the memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr., she surpassed her father, the Baptist minister and civil rights leader C.L. Franklin, as an icon in the Black community. And she took home her first two Grammys—one of which was in a brand-new category, Best Female R&B Solo Vocal Performance—while putting out two gold records, both of which hit the top 3 of the U.S. charts.

But perhaps the most definitive sign that Franklin had arrived was her June cover story in *Time* magazine, which labeled Franklin "The Sound of Soul" and gushed about a "chunky, 5-ft. 5-in. girl" who embodied soul's power, lyricism and ecstatic anguish.

"Aretha's vocal technique is simple enough: a direct, natural style of delivery that ranges over a full four octaves, and the breath control to spin out long phrases that curl sinuously around the beat and dangle tantalizingly from blue notes," trilled the magazine. "But what really accounts for her impact goes beyond technique: it is her fierce, gritty conviction. She flexes her rich, cutting voice like a whip; she lashes her listeners—in her words—'to the bone, for deepness.' " Bobby Taylor, leader of the soul group Bobby Taylor and the Vancouvers, perhaps said it best: "Aretha's music makes you sweaty, gives you a chill, makes you want to stomp your feet." ■

NATURAL WOMAN
Aretha Franklin recorded in the New York studios of Atlantic Records in April 1968. She would soon depart for her first tour of Europe and be splashed on the cover of *Time* magazine.

GRACE SLICK

SHAKING IT UP

The Jefferson Airplane star came from a socially prominent San Francisco family, but she liked nothing better than to poke her finger in the eye of the establishment.

Even for an era that produced ukulele-playing falsetto Tiny Tim and self-mutilating Iggy Pop, the performance stunt was out of left field. In the fall of 1968, Grace Slick, lead singer for the psychedelic rock band Jefferson Airplane, appeared on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* to sing a cut from the group's new album, *Crown of Creation*. The rocker, though not her bandmates, wore blackface throughout and ended the song by holding up her fist in a Black Panther salute. The next day Slick was on the front page of practically every newspaper in the country.

"Women wear makeup all the time, so why not black? Next time maybe I'll wear green" was one of a number of explanations the singer offered *Teenset* magazine. "The whole thing started when I was watching TV and someone said that Blacks look better on television in close-ups, so I wandered around the house wearing blackface and flashing on myself in the mirror. Perhaps a bored socialite can do the same thing and go shopping in blackface. . . ."

The article was titled GRACE SLICK IS AN ATTENTION-GETTING DEVICE, a headline that worked on multiple levels. The daughter of a prominent San Francisco family, Slick defied social conventions held dear by her parents' generation, and not only by being a female rocker. Before getting into music, the prep-school grad worked at I. Magnin, an exclusive department store, modeling couture dresses for wealthy women, but she quit because she thought music would pay better. She named her first band the Great Society as an eye roll at President Lyndon Johnson's social-reform program. Slick's signature song, "White Rabbit," was a paean to LSD, disguised as an homage to *Alice in Wonderland*.

The Airplane morphed into the Jefferson Starship and then just Starship before disbanding, but Slick, now 82, is still shaking things up. In 2017 she agreed to license the Starship song "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" to Chick-fil-A for an ad, even though the chain is known for its opposition to gay marriage. She then wrote an op-ed in *Forbes* magazine, calling the decision an opportunity to strike back at Chick-fil-A and announcing that she was donating all of the money to Lambda Legal, an organization that advances the civil rights of LGBTQ people and people living with HIV. "I decided to spend the cash in direct opposition to Chick-fil-A's causes—and to make a public example of them, too. We're going to take some of their money, and pay it back," she wrote. ■

STUDY IN CONTRASTS
Grace Slick posed for *Eye* magazine in San Francisco in 1968. She was often compared to Janis Joplin, with the bluesy Joplin as fire and the more cerebral Slick as ice.

GIRL SCOUTS USA
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BREAKING INTO THE BOYS' CLUB

PARTNERS IN RHYME
Dusty Springfield and Italian composer-arranger Pete Rugolo performed together. They also recorded the soundtrack to the 1968 feature film *The Sweet Ride*.

DUSTY SPRINGFIELD

PITCH PERFECT

After Aretha Franklin passed on "Son of a Preacher Man," Springfield turned it into a knockout hit.

Late at night in September 1968, 29-year-old singer Dusty Springfield stepped into a dark recording studio for her first album with Atlantic Records. Her producer, Jerry Wexler, was an industry veteran, but he had never seen anything like what happened next. As the session began, Springfield turned up the volume on the backing track so loud there was no way she could have heard her own voice. Wexler flinched. Yet he also had never heard anything like what followed: Springfield's smoky version of "Son of a Preacher Man," executed with perfect pitch. "I don't how to characterize it," Wexler said later of the singer's distinctive style, "but Dusty was the incarnation of the white soul queen."

"Son of a Preacher Man," about a young man and the girl he sneaks off with, became the focal point of Springfield's 1969 *Dusty in Memphis* album, her fifth, and the hit returned the singer to the Top 10 in America. The song became her signature—and so much of a pop-culture talisman that Quentin Tarantino used it to set the mood of a pivotal scene in *Pulp Fiction*, when Vincent (John Travolta) first meets Mia (Uma Thurman) as she snorts copious amounts of cocaine. "I've had [that scene] in my head for six or seven years," Tarantino said in 1994, "and it always was scored to 'Son of a Preacher Man.'"

Springfield, on the other hand, apparently had mixed feelings about her hit. After it charted, Aretha Franklin, who had turned the song down a year earlier, decided she liked it after all, in spite of the fact her father was a Baptist minister. So the Queen of Soul recorded her own version of "Preacher Man" in her distinct gospel sound. Years later, Springfield told the BBC that she thought Franklin phrased it better than she had and that she wished she'd done it that way. Both versions, for the record, are sublime. ■

JONI MITCHELL

RECKLESS DAUGHTER

She was the bewitching blonde with a guitar whose way with words made her one of the era's most influential singer-songwriters.

As David Crosby describes it, the first time he heard Joni Mitchell sing, he thought he'd "been hit by a hand grenade." It was 1967 in Coconut Grove, Florida, and Crosby was licking his wounds after being kicked out of the Los Angeles–based folk-rock group the Byrds. One evening he walked into a club called the Gaslight South, and there was Mitchell, wafting through "Both Sides Now." She was ethereal, with translucent skin, flaxen hair, and cutting cheekbones. Her voice was piercing, swooping; her songs, like nothing Crosby had heard. Before long, he not only was living with Mitchell in Los Angeles, he had engineered a demo session for her with Reprise Records.

The result was the March 1968 album *Joni Mitchell*, a.k.a. *Song to a Seagull*, that introduced the precociously talented Canadian to America and foreshadowed the creativity to come. Though the Beatles' 1967 *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the Who's 1969 *Tommy* are most often credited as the first concept albums, *Joni Mitchell* was one as well, divided into two parts. The first was "I Came to the City," which chronicled her failed marriage in Detroit and meandered through other slices of Mitchell's life—a night on the town, the tale of a lonely woman, a bitter city-dwelling taxi driver. The second side, "Out of the City and Down to the Seaside," celebrated nature and home life through songs such as "Sisotowbell Lane."

Joni Mitchell was released at a time when the reigning female sound was burning down the house, à la Janis Joplin and Aretha Franklin. But critics found Mitchell's voice a welcome respite. In July, *New York Times* critic Robert Shelton published a piece on Mitchell titled "Singer-Songwriters Are Making a Comeback." In it he noted that solo acoustic performers were on the rise and that "the high-frequency rock 'n' roar may have reached its zenith."

For music fans, Mitchell would have another even more profound impact. The recording sessions were booked for Sunset Sound, where the band Buffalo Springfield was also recording, and some historic connections were made. On occasion, Stephen Stills would sit in on Mitchell's session playing guitar and bass. Mitchell also befriended Stills's bandmate Neil Young, whom she knew from the Canadian folk circuit. By then, she and Crosby had broken up, but he eventually formed the supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and Mitchell would live with Graham Nash. In April 1968, she made a down payment on a cottage in Laurel Canyon, where Nash in 1970 would write about their countercultural domestic bliss on the CSNY hit "Our House." ■

TAKING FLIGHT
Singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell performed at the Bitter End nightclub in October of 1968, the year she released her first album, *Joni Mitchell*, a.k.a. *Song to a Seagull*.

ON HER OWN
Linda Ronstadt in 1968, the year she embarked on a solo career. The singer would introduce material by Neil Young and Jackson Browne and help popularize country-rock music.

LINDA RONSTADT

QUICK STUDY

Performing onstage in bare feet and a miniskirt, Ronstadt didn't take long to establish herself as the breakout star of the Stone Poneys.

The trouble started with "Different Drum," the 1967 cover that became the only hit single for the Stone Poneys, an L.A.-based Peter, Paul and Mary sound-alike band featuring a dark-eyed, stage-shy lead singer named Linda Ronstadt.

Written by Mike Nesmith before he became famous as a Monkee, "Different Drum" was a bluegrass-flecked tale about a pair of lovers with divergent views of the future. It was going to be Ronstadt's first lead-vocal single for the Poneys, and when she arrived in the studio to record "Drum," she expected to sing the song as an acoustic ballad. Instead, a new, faster arrangement had been written, and Capitol Records had brought in a rhythm section and string players to replace her bandmates, Kenny Edwards and Bobby Kimmel.

Clearly, Capitol had identified Ronstadt as a breakout star. As the singer described the episode in her memoir, "Different Drum" led to irreparable damage for the Poneys. Tensions flared between Edwards, Kimmel, and Ronstadt, and when it came time to promote the Poneys' 1968 album, *Linda Ronstadt, Stone Poneys and Friends, Vol. III*, morale had reached a low. No wonder. Capitol had chosen to feature Ronstadt alone on the front cover, and with friends and neighbors on the back. There were only two Kimmel-Edwards songs. The rest were from outside writers, including Laura Nyro and Nesmith.

To promote *Vol. III*, Capitol sent the Stone Poneys on tour to open for rock bands including the Doors, which made a bad situation worse. The Poneys were discouraged by opening for audiences that didn't want to hear them, and they disliked the raucous party scene that trailed rock bands on the road. By the end of the year, Edwards had quit and headed for India. Kimmel stuck around for a while but eventually took a job running a concert series at a guitar shop.

Ronstadt debuted as a solo act, albeit unprepared. Onstage she remained shy, and in the studio she faltered with inappropriate material. Her first album, *Hand Sown . . . Home Grown*, had a decidedly country twang to it but failed to get traction. So did the next two LPs. Ronstadt burned through a succession of managers, producers, and backup musicians (including Don Henley, Glenn Frey, Bernie Leadon, and Randy Meisner, who later founded the Eagles) and by 1972 was in debt and paying commissions to two managers, according to *Rolling Stone*. She finally broke through with Peter Asher as her producer and manager and released her first No. 1 album, *Heart Like a Wheel*, in 1974; it went on to sell 2 million copies and win her the Grammy for Best Female Country Vocal Performance the following year. ■

JOAN BAEZ

A VOICE FOR ALL

Even today, Baez is often associated with her former lover Bob Dylan. But that relationship is just a footnote in a career defined by musical activism and a quest for social justice.

In September 1968, folk-rock queen Joan Baez sequestered herself in a Nashville studio for a marathon recording session armed with dozens of songs by her former romantic and singing partner Bob Dylan, the folk-rock king. She spread the sheet music on the floor, closed her eyes, pointed, and sang whatever song came up. The result was a double album, *Any Day Now*, 16 covers of Dylan songs.

It had been three years since the couple had split, and given the hostility between them, it seemed odd to many that Baez would pursue an album like *Any Day Now*. But Baez had never hewed to the expected. The concept made sense to her and to her fans. The album went gold. "Dylan's songs blew people's minds, and when Joan started interpreting them, it went to another level," singer-songwriter Bob Neuwirth told *Rolling Stone* years later. "They should give her the [Nobel] Prize!"

That in 1968 Baez's identity was still tied up with Dylan was both inevitable and unfortunate. For two years, they had been one of rock's most talked-about couples: from 1963, when Baez famously helped launch Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival, until 1965, when the relationship imploded. But Baez was very much her own person long before Dylan came on the scene, and in any event, by 1968, she had moved on romantically and musically. In March, in a ceremony dubbed "the wedding of the year," she married her new love, draft-resistance leader David Harris, whom she had met in jail in California, both arrested for civil disobedience.

Following the marriage, Baez and Harris toured the country for a concert and lecture series advocating draft resistance. She also released *Daybreak*, a memoir that became a best-seller, and began branching out from folk music. Her first experiment was the unconventional album *Baptism*, works of poetry by Rimbaud and others that Baez both sang and spoke. Her collaborator on the project was classical composer Peter Schickele, better known at the time by his comic alter ego P.D.Q. Bach. The album was on the charts for the last third of the year, Baez noteddryly in *And a Voice to Sing With*, her 1987 memoir. "My audience could apparently withstand a broader range of musical experimentation than many people thought possible."

Baez's unique voice and musical talents surfaced fairly young. At high school in California she refused to leave class during a bomb drill, reasoning that if a nuclear bomb hit they would hardly be saved by running outside. She debuted at the Newport Folk Festival at 18 in 1959. By 1962 she had appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in a

OUTSPOKEN
Joan Baez at the CBS Studios recording sessions in Nashville in 1968. Because of the singer's history of left-wing activism, security guards were hired to stand outside the building.

Giacometti-esque artwork as a stand-in for the folk-music craze. The following year, having sung about civil rights around the country, she led the crowd at Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington with "We Shall Overcome."

After her breakup with Dylan, Baez came even more into her own. She moved further from the folk genre and experimented with different sounds. In 1967, she released *Joan*, with covers of songs by Donovan, Paul Simon, and the Beatles as well as readings of Edgar Allan Poe. During the Nashville session, she recorded a second disc, *David's Album*, a collection of country tunes as a gift to her new husband, a country-and-western fan.

Simultaneously, she also deepened her activism. In 1966, Baez stood in the fields alongside César Chávez and migrant farm workers striking for fair wages and protested capital punishment at San Quentin during a Christmas vigil. She spoke out against the war in Vietnam. At a packed concert at the Los Angeles Forum in 1968, she discussed her support for men who refused the draft. When Baez was done speaking, she sang "(You've Got to Walk That) Lonesome Valley," labeling it "a song of complicity." Spontaneously, 20 young men from the audience went onstage and handed Baez their draft cards. "The fact that she could stimulate so many men in turning in their draft cards was amazing," wrote *Billboard*.

After Baez criticized conscription during a concert in Los Angeles, 20 young audience members went onstage and handed her their draft cards.

Fast-forward five decades, and Baez has continued to impress and move audiences. She's been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—she used the occasion to plead for social justice—raised money for all kinds of causes, and even elicited an apology from Dylan for the callous way he treated her in 1965. The mea culpa came in a 2009 documentary about Baez's life, *Joan Baez: How Sweet the Sound*. "I feel very bad about it," Dylan said in an interview during the film, made for PBS. "I was sorry to see our relationship end," he added, saying he did it to keep Baez from getting "swept up in the madness my career had become."

At a concert after a screening of the film at the Toronto International Film Festival, Baez got the last word. She concluded her set with Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," in which she amused the crowd by singing part of it mimicking Dylan's voice. ■

A LIFE OF SONG
Opposite, Baez and her sister Mimi Farina recorded in Nashville in 1968. This page, Baez took a backstage break at the University of California, Berkeley.

CHAOS ALL AROUND US

In this often tumultuous time, American life seemed to be defined by violence, but rock provided an outlet.

ON THE OUTSIDE
Johnny Cash stood in front of Folsom Prison in January 1968. He was a champion of inmates and later testified before Congress to keep minors out of prison and to encourage rehabilitation efforts.

JOHNNY CASH

THE MAN IN BLACK

With *At Folsom Prison*, the singer helped put country music on equal footing with socially conscious rock.

"Hello, I'm Johnny Cash."

As if he needed the introduction. When the 35-year-old country-and-western singer appeared at California's Folsom State Prison on January 13, 1968, he was already a cult hero to convicts from Alcatraz to Sing Sing. Twelve years earlier, Cash had released "Folsom Prison Blues," a sympathetic portrait of a felon who had "shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die." The song became Cash's signature, sparking his interest in prisoners' rights and his commitment to jailhouse concerts.

But stepping onto the makeshift stage at Folsom's Dining Hall 2 in January 1968, Cash was the one in want of assistance. Years of rampant womanizing and drug and alcohol abuse had derailed Cash's career. His first marriage had fallen apart in 1966. His popularity had plummeted, and so had his record sales. Now, in a bid to regain momentum, Cash was gambling on a live album from a high-security prison, recorded in front of 2,000 inmates who made license plates for the state of California.

In many ways, prisoners and outlaws were the singer's natural audience. He grew up in a cotton-farming family in Arkansas after the Great Depression, and many of the songs he started writing as a teen dealt with sorrow and redemption. To escape rural life, Cash enlisted in the Air Force after high school. By 1953 he was stationed in West Germany, where he formed a band with some fellow airmen. After an officer screened the 1951 film noir *Inside the Walls of Folsom Prison*, Cash was inspired to write "Folsom Prison Blues," though the controversial line about shooting a man came from his imagination. "I sat with a

WALKING THE LINE
Cash headed into Folsom Prison on January 13, 1968, with producer Bob Johnston (second from left) and June Carter.

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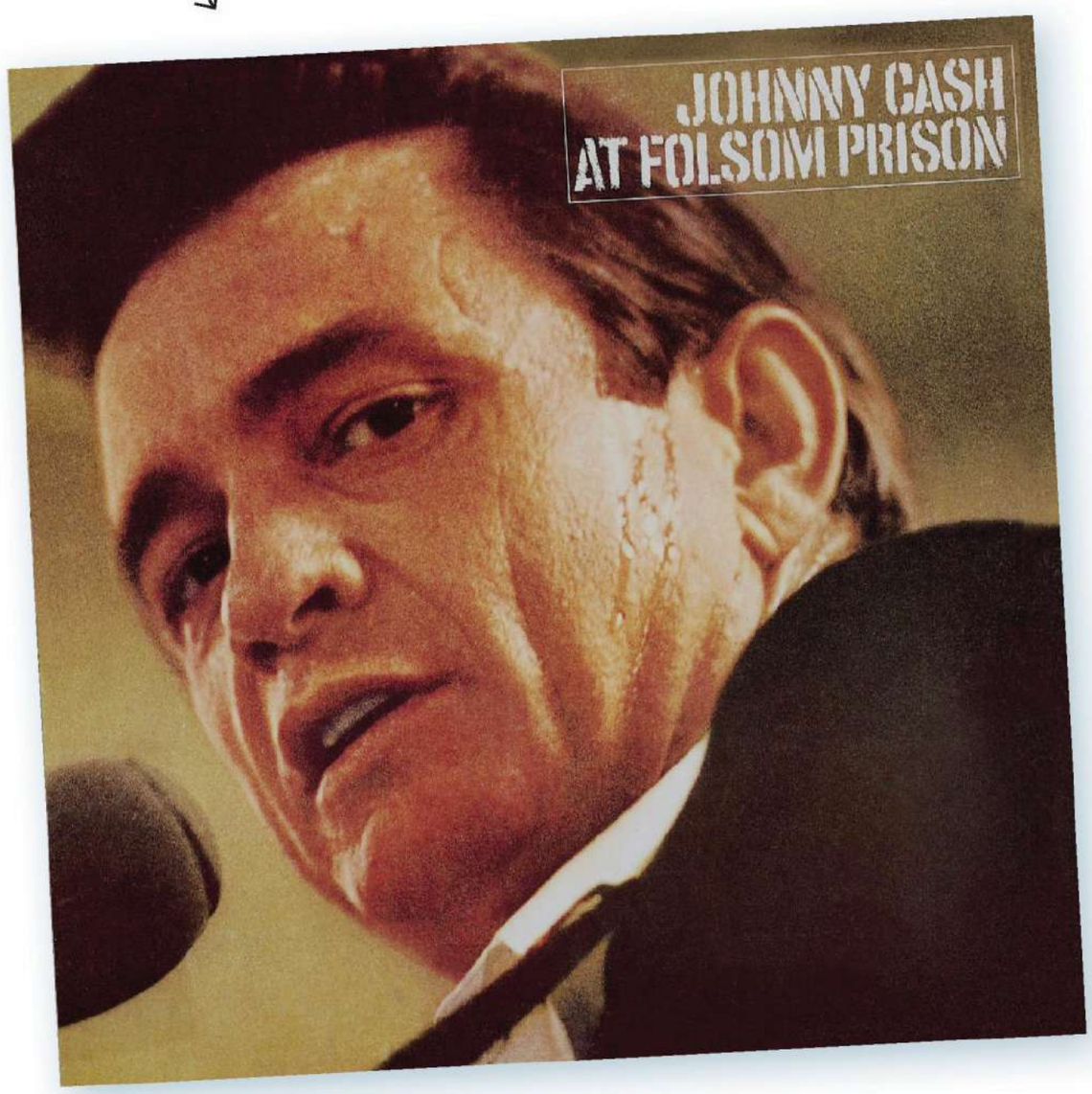
CHAOS ALL AROUND US

THE ALBUM REVITALIZED CASH'S CAREER.



pen in my hand, trying to think up the worst reason a person could have for killing another person, and that's what came to mind. It did come to mind quite easily though," Cash wrote in his autobiography.

Not long after returning to the U.S., Cash won a recording contract with Sun Records, the same label that launched Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins; in 1955 it put out "Folsom Prison Blues" as the future star's second single. With his shaky, low bass-baritone, Cash sang like he had lived every word of the recording, which made the country top 5. Hits including "I Walk the Line" and "Home of the Blues" followed, and he broadened his base, pulling in fans of rock, gospel, and the blues. Fame brought its own woes, however. Cash fell into a cycle of amphetamine and barbiturate abuse and lost control of his life. After a divorce, a reported suicide attempt, and a stint in rehab, Cash in 1967 needed a comeback.

In the music business, the late '60s were a time of activism and political engagement. Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Sly and the Family Stone, and other artists weighed in on racism, drug use, and the war in Vietnam. They led rallies and appeared at protests. Country music lacked the cachet and clout of pop, but Cash had in mind an album that would put him on the same footing as the rock stars and likewise champion a downtrodden minority—the prison population. With the help of his future wife, singer June Carter, he set out to make it happen.

Record companies at the time were reluctant to commit to live albums because they couldn't go back and edit. But with the support of producer Bob Johnston, Columbia gave the go-ahead, and in January, Cash set off for California with Carter; his band, the Tennessee Three; and his opening acts, Carl Perkins and the Statler Brothers. The musicians rehearsed for two days, met with then California governor Ronald Reagan, who wished them luck, and entered the prison doors.

The timing was a little awkward. Just two weeks earlier, some prisoners at Folsom had taken a guard hostage, and the atmosphere remained tense. Officials had told the

inmates that if anyone left their chairs during the performance, they would stop the concert. Guards with rifles patrolled the aisles. Taking the warden's warning seriously, the inmates sat so quietly, engineers had to dub in the hoots and hollers heard on some tracks when they were in the studio finishing the album.

Cash finessed the moment, playing to his audiences in two raucous sets and recording 16 songs. He opened with "Folsom Prison Blues" and followed with the execution countdown "25 Minutes to Go." He also performed a cover of "Greystone Chapel," a song that Folsom inmate Glen Sherley had composed about the prison's chapel. The album revitalized Cash's career, won two Grammys, and sold 3 million copies. The Man in Black became the biggest recording artist in the U.S.

"*At Folsom Prison* was the gold-selling shot in the arm that revived [Cash's] career," *Rolling Stone* gushed on its 500 Greatest Albums list, noting that within a year, Cash was writing liner notes for Bob Dylan and had already produced a second prison album, *At San Quentin*, which reached No. 1. For music lovers, the magazine instructs, "*At Folsom Prison* is essential Cash." ■

MOMENT OF THANKS
Cash shook the hand of inmate Glen Sherley, who wrote the song "Greystone Chapel" but did not know that Cash was going to perform it during his Folsom Prison concert.

DION DIMUCCI

HONORING FOUR SLAIN ICONS

"Abraham, Martin and John" provided comfort to a nation that needed it

In 1968, songwriter Dick Holler's biggest claim to fame was "Snoopy vs. the Red Baron," a loopy tribute to the canine star of the *Peanuts* comic strip who liked to sit on the roof of his doghouse and imagine himself as a World War I flying ace. The 1966 hit had been recorded by a Florida group, the Royal Guardsmen, and released by Laurie Records. But in the wake of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, Holler, like the rest of the country, was bewildered and looking for answers. What came to him was a church-like ballad, "Abraham, Martin and John," in which he drew comparisons between four fallen civil rights heroes: President Abraham Lincoln, King, President John F. Kennedy, and his brother Robert. The Royal Guardsmen did not seem like the ideal group to record "Abraham," so Laurie took it to Dion DiMucci, most famous for "The Wanderer." DiMucci was working to get his career back on track after a long battle with drugs but was unimpressed by the song. He did not even understand how the four stanzas—one about someone named Abraham, another about John, another on Martin, and a fourth on Bobby—connected. (Either Dion's mother-in-law or his producer Phil Gernhard explained.) Laurie made a deal: The label would re-sign him if he covered "Abraham." The ballad became a lovely comeback for Dion, and eventually he embraced its message. "It was like they had the courage to believe that a state of love really can exist," he told an interviewer. ■

MUCH APPRECIATED
Dion DiMucci has said he received more than 4,000 letters thanking him for "Abraham, Martin and John."

HAIR: THE MUSICAL

HIPPIES ON STAGE

A groundbreaking Broadway musical celebrated unwashed hair, LSD trips, and draft-card burning. Americans loved it—or many of them, anyway.

Staircase, a comic play about a gay man in London accused of propositioning a policeman, was already progressive for Broadway when it ran at New York's Biltmore Theatre from January through March of 1968. But that story paled compared with a production mounted later that spring on the Biltmore stage: the patchouli-scented rock musical *Hair*.

That groundbreaking show, which used a racially integrated cast and invited the audience to come onto the proscenium for a "be-in," celebrated all things hippie. There was draft-card burning and drugs, full frontal nudity, and a song about sodomy. In the opening scene, the hero, Claude, sat center stage while the other members of the cast—his "tribe"—mingled with theatergoers. As the show progressed, members of the tribe linked President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) with the FBI, CIA, and LSD in a number titled "Initials" and pretended to be tourists asking the cast members why their hair was so long. They also enacted a violent acid trip where nuns strangle monks and Green Berets shoot Native Americans.

Yet *Hair* was not only a smash on Broadway, it became a cultural event that influenced the public's attitudes toward the war in Vietnam, color palettes, graphic design, how people wore their locks, and pop music. The Cowsills' cover of the title song, "Hair," would be the biggest single of their career; the Fifth Dimension produced a medley of "Aquarius" and "Let the Sun Shine In" that topped the charts for six weeks; Oliver delivered a No. 3 hit with "Good Morning Starshine"; and Three Dog Night and Jennifer Warnes both released versions of "Easy to Be Hard," though Three Dog Night's traveled further up the *Billboard* Hot 100, to No. 4. Even the high priestess of soul, Nina Simone, got in on the *Hair* score, recording a medley of "Ain't Got No" and "I Got Life" that was a No. 2 smash in the U.K.

Critical reception to the play was equally enthusiastic, though some reviewers acknowledged that its contents were not for everyone. Citing a moment when Claude announced, "I want to eat mushrooms. I want to sleep in the sun," *New York Times* critic Clive Barnes wrote that some audience members might reject the themes of alienation and protest. But, he wrote, "as long as Thoreau is part of America's heritage, others will respond to this musical that marches to a different drummer." ■

FOLLICLE FOLLIES

"You probably don't have to be a supporter of Eugene McCarthy to love it," wrote critic Clive Barnes of *Hair*, "but I wouldn't give it much chance among the adherents of Governor Reagan."

ONE-WAY
SEAN CONN
IS
YOU ONLY LIVE TW

JAMES BROWN

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Brown operated outside of the mainstream civil rights movement, but the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the singer helped keep the peace in Boston with a concert.

The house lights went up. James Brown stopped mid-song, and the threat of violence filled Boston Garden.

It was April 5, 1968, the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was killed, and a group of angry Brown fans, mostly African American, had rushed at a phalanx of white police positioned onstage. Race riots had already broken out in Roxbury, Massachusetts, just five miles from Boston, as well as in more than a hundred other cities around the country. Now, inside the Garden, it seemed that an already tragic moment was about to get worse.

With the officers poised to react, Brown took the mic and pleaded with the youths for calm. "Let me finish the show. We're all Black. Let's respect ourselves. Are we together or are we ain't?" When the audience called out, "We are," the mood reset. Brown signaled the drummer, "Hit the thing, man!" and picked up where he left off.

James Brown never wanted to be part of the mainstream civil rights movement. The Godfather of Soul was skeptical of King's pacifist approach and more than once rebuffed overtures from radical Blacks. In 1969, he would play Richard Nixon's inaugural ball, alienating both factions. But in 1968, in the aftermath of King's murder, Brown for a moment became an unlikely voice in pushing the fight for equality forward. He appeared on television and urged people to organize, not terrorize. He was invited to a state dinner at the White House and found a note on his chair from Lyndon Johnson thanking him for what he was doing for the country. In August he released "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud," which almost single-handedly changed the tenor of the national conversation.

Before Brown's song, the language of the civil rights movement had been uplifting and focused on equality, wrote the entertainment website A.V. Club. "Brown's statement was no less noble, but the tone was completely different. . . . He portray[ed] his race as something to celebrate, not as an obstacle to work around. What's more, Brown doesn't simply ask the listener to feel the same way—he insists on it."

Brown launched his career as a gospel singer in the late 1950s, and by the late '60s he was one of the most famous performers in the U.S., known for his outrageous stage act and provocative lyrics.

THE DAY AFTER
Boston city council member Thomas Atkins, left, spoke with James Brown and Mayor Kevin White before Brown's concert, held the day after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

Brown offered a solemn tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. and introduced the Boston mayor as a "swinging cat."

But even with racial violence engulfing the country and his own exposure to prejudice, Brown mostly stayed on the sidelines. He argued that self-reliance was the most effective protest (his 1966 hit "Don't Be a Drop-Out" begged African Americans to prioritize education) and capitalism the best form of self-realization. "He talked sometimes about King, but not obsessively," Rev. Al Sharpton said later. "He was in one world and lived in it. He respected Dr. King. . . . But he did not believe in nonviolence."

Like millions of others, Brown shifted his worldview on April 4, 1968. He was preparing for the Boston concert, his biggest show yet, and was in the middle of a radio interview when he learned that King had been killed in Memphis. Within hours, Brown became a de facto spokesman, giving statements to Black radio stations and pleading for listeners not to express their outrage and sorrow with violence.

In Boston, Garden executives, worried about rioting, weighed canceling the concert as a way to keep angry, grieving citizens off the streets. Arguing against the plan were a black councilman and the event's promoter, who feared that such a move would be seen as preemptively punishing African American fans and could very well trigger the violence the city wanted to prevent. After hearing both sides, Boston mayor Kevin White crafted a hybrid response. The concert would go on, but to encourage people to stay home, it would also be broadcast on television for free. An arrangement was made with a local station, and when Brown stepped onto the Garden's stage, there were only about 2,000 ticketholders in the arena, with some 12,000 seats empty.

Brown and his own band members were worried about violence as well, but he kept his audience spellbound, speaking directly to the fans with a mixture of gravity and levity. He offered a somber tribute to King, introduced the mayor as "a cool and swinging cat" and established himself as an authority. He also found himself post-concert a man in demand. In Washington, D.C., where several people had been killed in violent riots that stretched over five days, the mayor insisted that Brown fly to the capital directly from Boston to address the African American community, as he had in the Garden. Brown did, appearing on television, empathizing with people's outrage, but urging them to act rationally and responsibly. "Don't burn. Give the kids a chance to learn," he counseled. "Go home. Be ready. Be qualified. Be somebody—that is Black power."

INCLUDES RARE LIVE RECORDING OF "SAY IT LOUD—I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD"

The singer would articulate the message in an equally powerful way in August with the release of "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud," which exhorted Blacks to action as it lifted their spirits. It was seen by some as the musical analogue to Stokely Carmichael's famous "Black Power" speech from 1966, moving Black pride into the mainstream conversation. By the end of the decade, *Black* would replace *Negro* as the preferred word, in no small part because of reaction to "Say It Loud."

Brown later noted that the song cost him some white support but it had been worth it. "People called 'Black and Proud' militant and angry—maybe because of the line about dying on your feet instead of living on your knees," Brown wrote in his autobiography. "You shouldn't have to tell people what race they are, and you shouldn't have to teach people they should be proud. . . . But it was necessary to teach pride then, and I think the song did a lot of good for a lot of people." ■

BROKEN AGREEMENT
Brown, left, was promised a fee of $60,000 for the Garden concert but received a payment of about $15,000. The show was broadcast live on local TV.

AGAINST THE WAR

The war in Vietnam took a horrific turn in January 1968 with the Tet Offensive—fierce coordinated attacks on more than 100 cities in South Vietnam. From there, it only got worse. The year went down as the bloodiest of the conflict, with a total of a quarter of a million deaths, including almost 15,000 Americans, a 50 percent increase from 1967. At home, Americans stopped believing the end was near and took to the streets in record numbers to protest. Joining the hippies and antiwar intellectuals were parents, brothers and sisters, and even Vietnam veterans. 1968 would produce many memorable antiwar anthems—and would result in a ban in some venues on Country Joe and the Fish's iconic satire "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag."

THE BYRDS FIRED DAVID CROSBY AND THEN REPLACED HIS PHOTO ON THE ALBUM WITH A HORSE HEAD.

"2+2=?"
BOB SEGER

In January, Bob Seger, whose band then went by the Bob Seger System, released the defiant "2+2=?" with the lyric "Yes it's true I am a young man/But I'm old enough to kill." The song was a little tough for AM radio and never became a hit, but it was included on Seger's debut album for Capitol, *Ramblin' Gamblin' Man*, whose title cut helped put Seger on the map.

"DRAFT MORNING"
THE BYRDS

The same month, the Byrds came out with "Draft Morning," about a young inductee, on *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*. The song was originally written by David Crosby, but he was fired from the Byrds before the band finished the track, and when the group went to the studio to lay down the vocals, they couldn't remember Crosby's lyrics. They reworked the words and gave themselves a cowriting credit, much to Crosby's irritation.

"SKY PILOT"
THE ANIMALS

And then there was the Animals' psychedelic "Sky Pilot," about a military chaplain who tells the troops they are "soldiers of God." The seven-minute track took up both sides of a 45, but it was still a hit, reaching No. 14 in the U.S. It remained a staple on FM radio for years.

"THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER"
THE DOORS

Jim Morrison's father was a high-ranking naval officer during the Gulf of Tonkin incident—the 1964 confrontation that led the U.S. to escalate its involvement in Vietnam—which may have accounted for Morrison's antiwar position. The Doors' 1968 album *Waiting for the Sun* included "The Unknown Soldier," about children at home watching the war on television while their fathers were getting killed, and the infamous "Five to One," which was recorded while Morrison was clearly drunk (he hiccuped in the middle of a line). A live performance of the song in Miami in 1969 led to his arrest and trial on charges of drunkenness, indecency, and profanity.

THE ALBUM VERSION OF "2+2=?" HAD A DEAD STOP; THE 45 DIDN'T, TO PLACATE RADIO STATIONS.

CINEMA VERITÉ
The Doors made an experimental film for "The Unknown Soldier" that shows Jim Morrison (this page) being shot by a mock firing squad, followed by a montage of news footage from Vietnam.

THE BEATLES: ON A HIGH NOTE

The success of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* seemed to send the Fab Four into free fall.

SEXY SADIE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
The Beatles and their girlfriends, wives, and friends with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at his ashram in Rishikesh, India, in March 1968.

ASHRAM WITH A VIEW
The village of Rishikesh, beside the Ganges River, in northern India. Opposite, Ringo Starr looked on as John Lennon and Paul McCartney played their D-28 Martin acoustic guitars during their stay at Rishikesh in February 1968.

Going into 1968, the Beatles had the world at their command, to paraphrase "Nowhere Man," but it was doing John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr precious little good. As the new year kicked in, the band was making piles of money, so much that it actually needed a tax shelter. Thus was born Apple Corps, an experiment in self-management

that would go disastrously wrong, eventually pitting writing partners Lennon and McCartney against each other. Then came February and an attempt to find spiritual solace at an ashram in India. The trip backfired too: a creatively fertile but personally disappointing voyage that ended with members of the band accusing their guru, Maharishi Mahesh, of sexual impropriety. May was the start of recording sessions for the White Album, a period invariably described today as rancorous and fractured. The Beatles' stand-alone release "Lady Madonna" peaked at No. 4—great for most bands, but the Fab Four's lowest-charting single in four years. Even one of 1968's bright spots, "Hey Jude," was born of melancholy: McCartney wrote it to comfort 5-year-old Julian Lennon in the face of the divorce of his parents, John and Cynthia.

In retrospect, the unraveling of the group Lennon once described as "more popular than Jesus" seems almost inevitable—a reaction to the rapturous response to 1967's *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, to the musicians' foundering after the death of their manager Brian Epstein the prior August, and to the unforgiving physics of four unique talents working together. Even as the year began, the Beatles already had begun to drift apart. Lennon and McCartney were taking different directions musically. McCartney still loved and lived for the band, and his songs showed it. They were celebratory and warm, filled with everyman narratives. Lennon's writing was turning dark and more personal, reflecting his desire to move on from the

Beatles. Guitarist Harrison, meanwhile, wanted to be taken more seriously, while drummer Starr felt marginalized. It was a perfect storm of dissatisfaction, observed Lennon's future wife, Yoko Ono. "I don't think you could have broken up four very strong people like them," Ono said later, "even if you tried. So there must have been something that happened within them—not an outside force at all."

Pinpointing the origin of the free fall is not simple, but it may very well have been February 1967, when Harrison's wife, Pattie Boyd, who was searching for a spiritual path, found a newspaper ad for a Transcendental Meditation class. She began to attend, and she got her husband interested. Later in the year, the Harrisons and the other Beatles attended a lecture the Maharishi gave in London, and along with Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull, they set off in August for a 10-day meditation conference in Bangor, Wales. While the band was away, news arrived that Epstein, 32, had died of what the coroner ruled an "incautious self-overdose" of sleeping pills. The friends, unmoored and unprepared, turned to the Maharishi for comfort. "I knew that we were in trouble then," Lennon later said. "I didn't really have any misconceptions about our ability to do anything other than play music, and I was scared. I thought, 'We've f---in' had it.' "

The most immediate challenge was a practical one. Epstein had discovered the group in 1961 and steered it to success. Who could fill his shoes? The Beatles solved the problem in January 1968 when they decided to manage their own affairs and launched Apple Corps as the corporate entity behind them. Apple Corps was part investment shelter, part experiment in socialism, and an almost instantaneous catastrophe. It started with the Beatles announcing that they would give away their riches to aspiring creative types. Scriptwriters, poets, fashion designers, playwrights, and engineers were invited to submit projects for funding consideration.

GROUP DYNAMICS
In the U.S. to promote Apple Corps, McCartney and Lennon appeared on *The Tonight Show*. Opposite, from left, Apple artist Mary Hopkin, Yoko Ono, Lennon, Starr, McCartney, and Harrison.

"We're in the happy position of not needing any more money," McCartney explained to a reporter in May 1968, "so for the first time the bosses aren't in it for a profit . . . a kind of Western communism."

From around the globe, an unending stream of artistically minded, handout-seeking hippies showed up at Apple Corps's reception desk—a place described at the time as resembling "the waiting room of a Haight-Ashbury VD clinic." The Beatles installed friends and family, qualified or not, in the most important posts, and spending ran amok. Apple Corps opened a fashion boutique, run by Harrison's sister-in-law and a childhood buddy of Lennon's, which in its first seven months reportedly lost 200,000 British pounds, the equivalent of about $4.6 million today. The staff psychic, Alexis Mardas, a.k.a. "Magic Alex," was given funding to build a new recording studio. Accountants were soon trying to trace an Apple-owned Mercedes that vanished.

By the time February rolled around, the Beatles had decided to fly to Rishikesh, India, and spend two months

Apple Corps opened a fashion boutique, which in its first seven months reportedly lost 200,000 British pounds, the equivalent of $4.5 million today.

meditating with the Maharishi, largely at the suggestion of Harrison, who was trying to gain more influence over the band's direction. Like Apple Corps, the trip became a source of friction. Harrison suspected that Lennon and McCartney were using the retreat to write, and he confronted them: "We're not here to talk music. We're here to meditate!" Lennon, already in love with Ono, almost stopped talking to his wife, Cynthia, and asked for a separate room. Starr, unable to stomach the food and deal with the bugs, left after about two weeks. McCartney, who thought the ashram was too much like school, was not far behind. Lennon and Harrison remained, but when rumors began to circulate that the Maharishi had

THE BEATLES: ON A HIGH NOTE

assaulted a female student, Lennon demanded that they depart without an explicit explanation. "We're leaving," he told the Maharishi, adding, "If you're so cosmic, you'll know why." (Years later, Harrison and McCartney would reconcile with the guru.)

Back in London, the chaos at Apple continued until an accountant reviewing the band's financial records quit, leaving behind a blunt memo indicating that their books were "a mess." Realizing they needed a savvy businessperson to turn the company around, the Beatles initiated a search, but that opened yet another schism. While McCartney pushed to hire his future father-in-law, the New York lawyer Lee Eastman, Lennon persuaded Starr and Harrison to choose Allen Klein, the famously difficult-to-deal-with business manager of the Rolling Stones. In a meeting to discuss the future of the company, Klein referred to Eastman with an expletive. Eastman responded in kind. That Klein ended up running Apple was unacceptable to McCartney, according to a review in the *Independent* of a 2017 documentary about Apple called *The Beatles, Hippies and Hells Angels*.

FREE FOR ALL

Declaring they were "tired of being shopkeepers," the Beatles gave away merchandise from their Baker Street shop to first-comers, including the London police, opposite, and fans, above.

As the fractious recording sessions for *The Beatles*, or the White Album, began, the writing was on the wall. Though the band had returned from India bursting with ideas and energy, each member spun off in a different direction. Lennon set the tone by bringing his new girlfriend, Ono, to the studio, breaking the unwritten rule that no outsiders were allowed. The two sat on the floor together, whispering, as Ono offered Lennon feedback on his songs and accompanied him every time

CHANGING PARTNERS
Many fans blamed the romance between Ono and Lennon—pictured together here at the Mercury Theatre in London—for breaking up the Beatles. Opposite, Lennon with McCartney the same day. Lennon later said he first thought McCartney wrote "Hey Jude" to give his blessing to the relationship with Ono.

he left the room. The first time she spoke in the studio, the room fell silent, according to *Rolling Stone*. "Did somebody speak?" Paul demanded to know, interjecting every sentence with f-bombs. "Did you say something, George? Your lips didn't move!"

The band members were nasty to each other. Lennon stormed out of the recording of "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," which he found tedious, and made fun of lyrics he found inane. McCartney at one point asked Harrison to tone down his guitar playing, and Harrison in turn brought in his friend Eric Clapton as proof of his credentials. Producer George Martin, with diminishing influence over the group, took off on vacation. Starr disappeared for two weeks. A longtime recording engineer quit. McCartney later referred to the record as the Tension Album.

In the end, *The Beatles* had to be released as a double album out of mutual animosity, the only way to appease all four musicians. McCartney, who had entered an American phase, dabbled in country ("Rocky Raccoon"), folk ("Blackbird"), and the Beach Boys ("Back in the U.S.S.R."). Lennon turned more experimental and abstract with "Revolution"

Band members were so nasty to each other during the recording sessions for *The Beatles* that McCartney later referred to the LP as the Tension Album.

and "Happiness Is a Warm Gun." Harrison blossomed as a writer ("While My Guitar Gently Weeps"), and Starr even penned his first song ("Don't Pass Me By"). "It was the first album by the Beatles or in the history of rock by four solo artist in one band," wrote music critic Lester Bangs.

To usher out the year, Lennon and Ono posed naked on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. In the accompanying interview, Lennon dismissed fans who disapproved of the picture, the relationship, and their new album. "When people attack Yoko and me, we know they're paranoiac. We don't worry too much. It's the ones that don't know, and you know they don't know—they're just going round in a blue fuzz. The thing is, the album also says: Look, lay off, will you? It's two people—what have we done?" ■

MOD MEN
On July 28, 1968, the Beatles spent a day with war photographer Don McCullin in what became known as the "Mad Day Out." Here, Harrison, McCartney, Lennon, and Starr stood at Wapping Pierhead, the sixth of seven locations.

LIFE EXPLORES

MUSIC OF 1968

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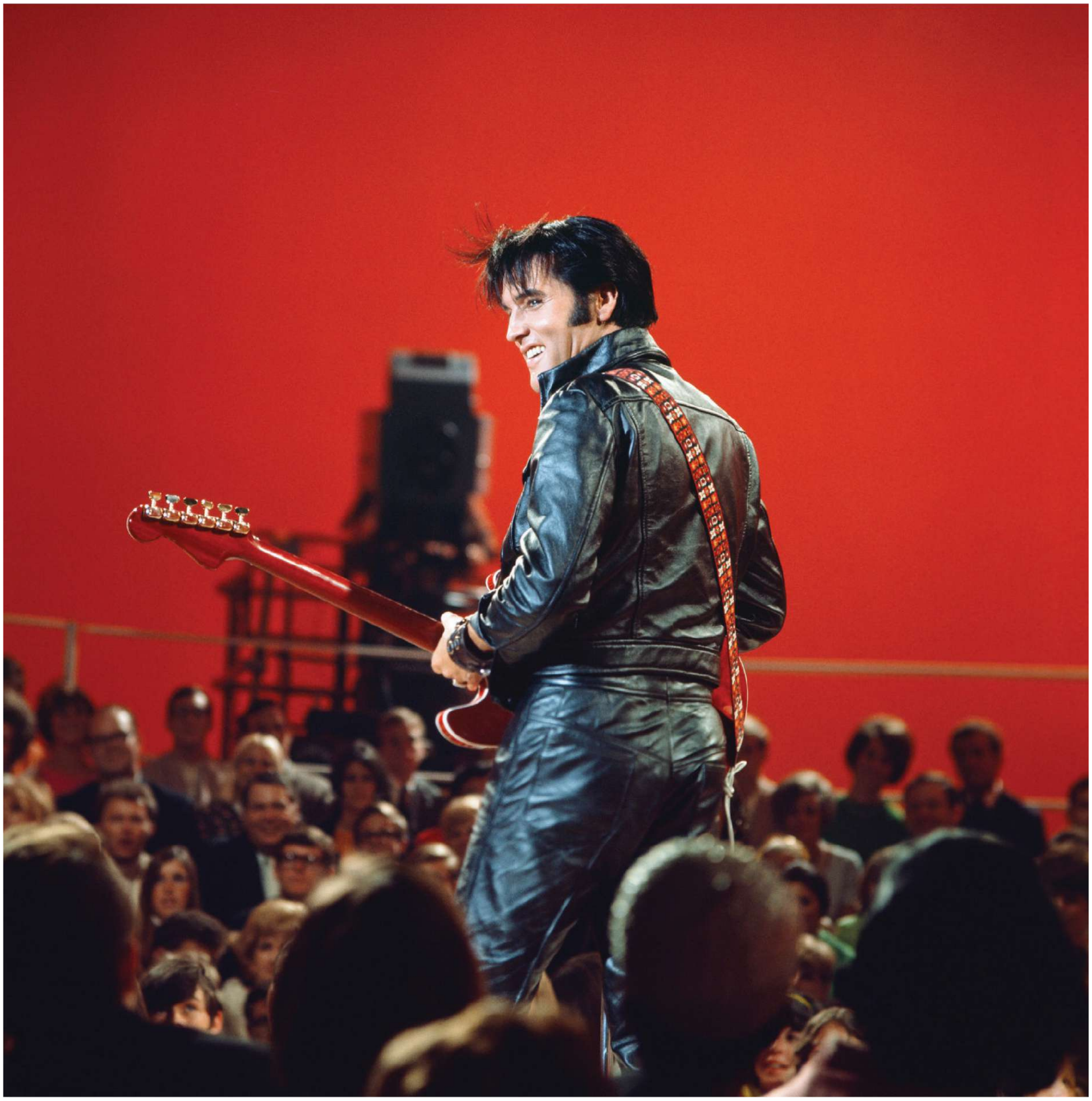

HAIL TO THE KING

After seven years in Hollywood, Elvis gyrated back onto the concert stage in December 1968 with a televised NBC special. From the moment the 33-year-old hit his first note, he proved that his voice was undiminished and that he could still rock the head-to-toe leather look.

JIMI HENDRIX

JANIS JOPLIN

JOHNNY CASH